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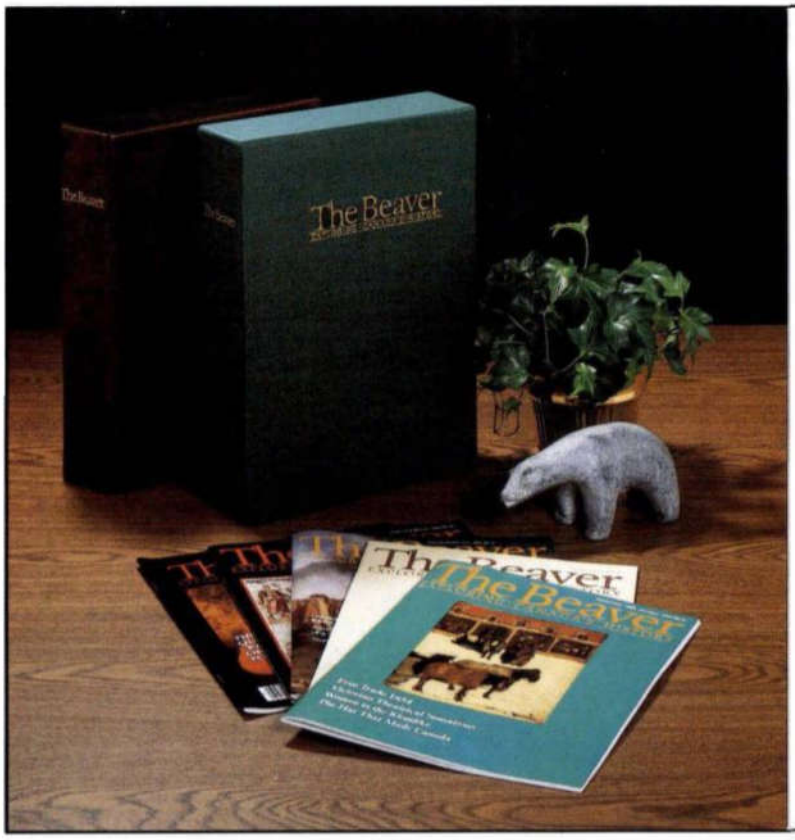
# The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

C.W. Jefferys: Artist/Historian • Steamboats in the Ice
Gateway to the Arctic • Nightmare on the Great Western
A Bigot at Red River

*Happy New Year*

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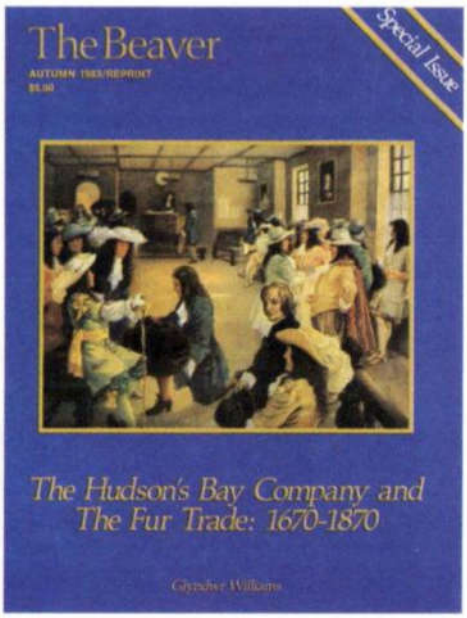


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# The Beaver

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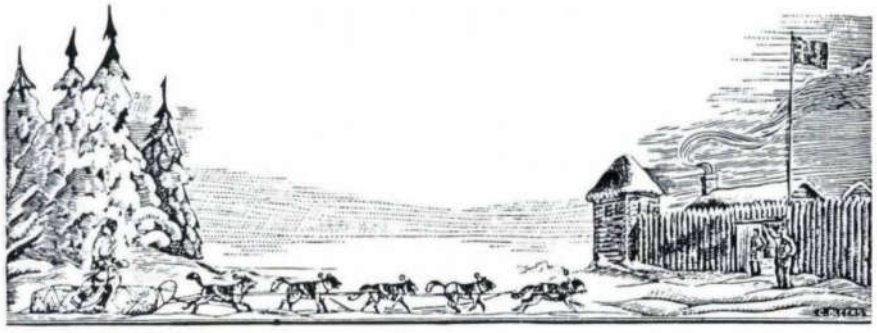


# Winter in the Old Dominion

Unlike those who went before us, we have become, to a considerable extent, a nation of spectators. A hundred years ago, and even more recently in time, Canadians of all ages flocked out into the winter weather in their thousands to skate, toboggan, play hockey and tramp through the January woods on snowshoes.

Many Canadians still enjoy outdoor activities in winter, coming to grips with Canada's Northern reality, and increasing numbers of people are participating once again in outdoor activities on winter hillsides and at carnivals. Most, however, only participate from a distance, seated in front of a television in a well-heated room.

Canada, throughout its history, has been an "open air" sort of country and Canadians have been seen at their best in a natural setting, usually with snow falling somewhere in the picture.

We used to brag about our winters. "Cold enough to freeze the hair off a dog's back", wrote Thomas C. Haliburton in 1853. Stephen Leacock, after a visit to Western Canada in 1937, marvelled at the cold wind: "With the thermometer at 30° below zero and the wind behind him, a man walking on Main Street, Winnipeg, knows which side of him is which".

Lord Dufferin, speaking in snowbound Gimli, Manitoba, in 1877, had a message that Canadians of today might consider with profit. The Governor-General was convinced that cold weather is a good thing: "A constitution nursed upon the oxygen of our bright winter atmosphere makes its owner feel as though he could toss about the pine trees in his glee."

Lord Dufferin's possibly over-hearty delight in cold weather may be somewhat extreme for the jaded Canadian of today, but there is an element of truth in the assertion that the dry Northern cold has a stimulating effect and that the sight of snow blowing out of a winter sky can quicken the pulse and concentrate the mind.

"With the snow and frost comes brightness and cheer, good spirits and invigorating amusements", wrote an anonymous editorialist in *Dominion Illustrated* for 10 January, 1891. Warming to his frosty theme, the writer continued: "The December just closed has been an unusually happy month in these respects. From first to last nothing prevailed but a clear, cold atmosphere, producing the buoyancy and general good-feeling both in body and mind, always so pleasurable — especially so during the sparkle of the Christmas season. It should be a matter of just pride to all Canadians — this bright, clear winter of ours — when we have it pure and unadulterated; it not only gives us the opportunity for the most healthy form of recreation, but it means that a good volume of business will be done by the general trade throughout the Dominion, the result of which will materially effect all classes of the community. It is well to emphasize to our many readers, non-resident in Canada, that our cold winters, instead of being the drawback that so many persons, accustomed to the damp and sloppy season in England and the United States, consider them to be, are in reality a substantial boon, and mean a thriving business for our merchants, vigour in body and mind for our citizens, and pleasure for all healthy lads and lasses."

That is the old, optimistic Canada speaking a full century ago. Winter was a fact of life. It could be harsh, but you made the best of it: "Sweet are the uses of adversity". You turned what some might see as a disadvantage into a blessing.

Our great-grandparents and their children stepped out into the winter weather with bounding enthusiasm. They spent hours in the open air on frozen ponds and ice-bound rivers, walking in the winter woods or skimming along country roads in sleighs drawn by puffing horses.

Was it a happier and more confident Dominion of Canada that looked out onto a white landscape at New Year's, 1891? It appears to have been so. The nation was still in its first youth — and possibly its first innocence. Queen Victoria was on the throne and the Empire was flourishing. The coming century might well belong to Canada. The nation was prosperous and all the prospects were pleasing. Even a day on which the mercury dipped to −40° was seen as a bracing challenge. We were a hardy people. We could take it. The winter landscape, extending far to the West from the brightly lit cities, towns and villages of Eastern Canada, had a history and a future and it all belonged to us. Canada, for all its frost and snow and for all its vast distances and its difficulties of language and religion, was a good place in which to live. It was a country where you could make something of yourself if you were willing to work. Thousands of newcomers were pouring in and thousands more would soon come to make new homes on the broad prairie that was sleeping under miles of sparkling snow as Old Canada celebrated the holidays a hundred years ago.

*Canadian children enjoy the outdoors a hundred years ago. An illustration from the Marquis of Lorne's book on Canada, published in 1885.*

Have we lost something in the intervening century? We have misplaced our innocence, certainly, and, for the moment, at least, we appear to have lost our enthusiasm and zest. Canadians at New Year's 1991 are said to be pessimistic about the old Dominion's future, unhappy with its institutions, and even uncertain about how to continue as a nation. The founding races are at odds. There is fear of recession. We dislike our leaders and we do not seem to be overly fond of ourselves. There is a common feeling that we took a wrong turning somewhere along the road to 1991; that we gave away too much, lost sight of where we hoped to go and even forgot why we began the journey in the first place. Many claim to hear the Fathers of Confederation turning in their graves.

There are no easy solutions to what ails us as a nation and as a people, and this is not the place to proffer the absolute prescription or panacea. One first step, however, might be to turn once again to the land and to rediscover those simple pleasures that were so exhilarating to our enthusiastic great-grandparents. Canada is not simply constitutions, politicians and conferences; it is people and land, history and dreams. We need to step out once again into winter, to test ourselves, as we once did, against the rugged climate of this Northern land. The secret of the old Dominion is to be found in the Canadian countryside, in the broad sweep of the land, in the scent of the woods, in the wide sky of the prairies, in the mountains and on the long shores. Lord Dufferin knew what he was talking about. Only in the open air, in winter, can we throw off the lethargy that has taken hold of us, reawaken our minds and prepare ourselves for our unfolding history. ♦

C.W. JEFFERYS

# The Artist as Historian

## By Nancy Gibson

*Contemporary art and literature, the news of the day, and even much of human history make me feel that I am an alien astray in an inexplicable world. The sequence of act and consequence I can follow, but the motives that impel mankind escape my understanding, the springs of action seem often so unreasonable that they produce a feeling of profound isolation, an overwhelming sense of strangeness of the conditions of existence in which I find myself. Is this peculiar to my temperament, or is it a feeling common to all human beings and underlying all human thought?*

**— C.W. Jefferys**

Charles William Jefferys has left us an artistic legacy of unusual diversity, quality and quantity. Best known for his historical drawings such as *Rebels Drilling at North York in 1837* and *On the Cariboo Road to the British Columbia gold fields*, Jefferys has influenced the perception of history for generations of school children. Perhaps only the CN promotional photograph of Spirit Island is more familiar to Canadians than some of Jefferys' sketches. His watercolour landscapes are also highly regarded, although perhaps less familiar to the general public. But despite the universal recognition of his work, little is known of the man himself.

Jefferys is remembered first as an artist and illustrator, but he was also a writer, and something of a philosopher. He produced historical works, children's stories, articles and essays, and he also wrote hundreds of letters. These personal records reveal a man who was introspective, affectionate, and deeply involved with his own detailed and rich perception of the world in which he lived and worked. The vague sense of estrangement that he felt was to be his strength throughout his life, permitting him to maintain a slight distance from the surroundings he described, and the events in which he participated.

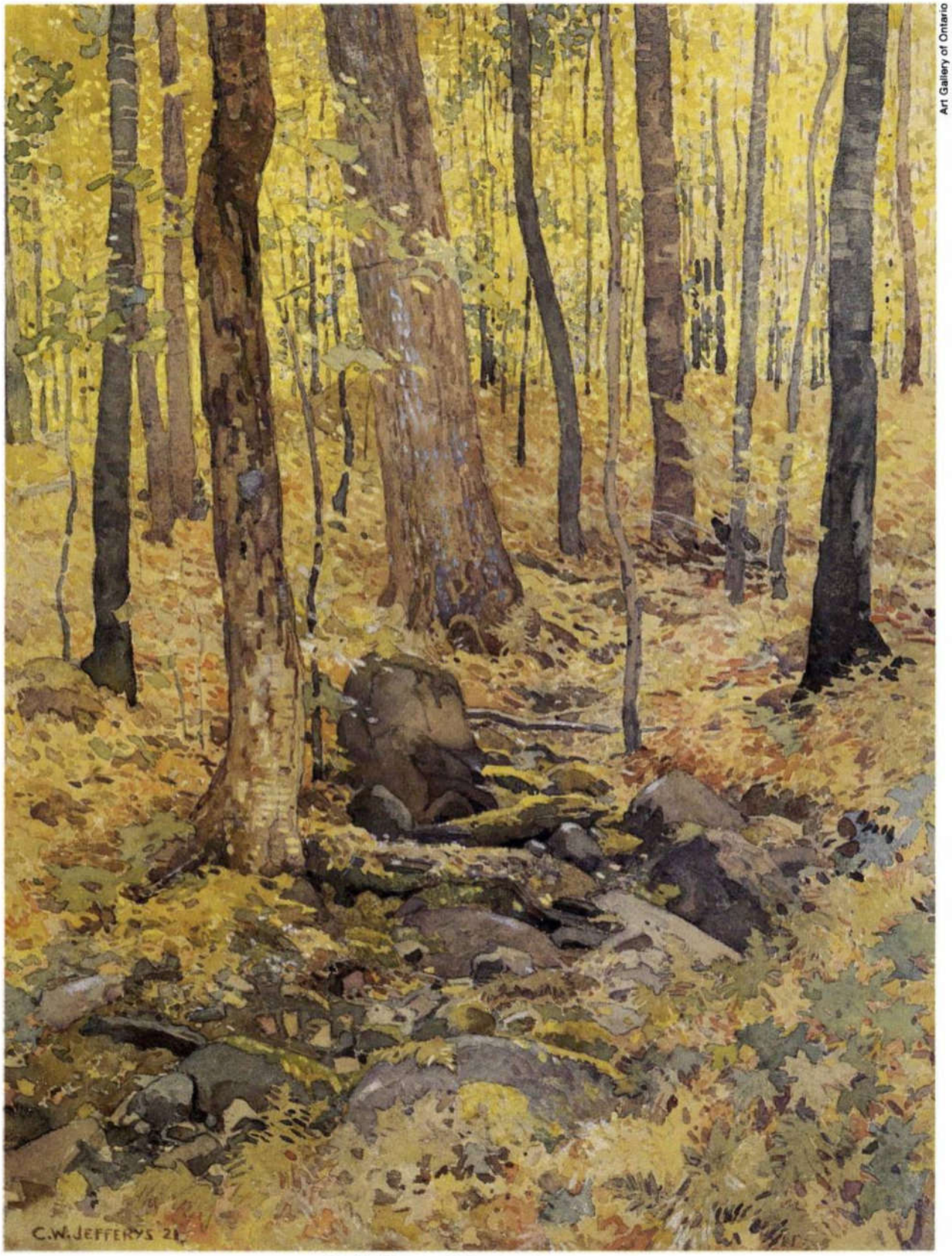
"We cannot hold ourselves entirely reponsible for the circumstances of our lives," he observed in a note in 1921, "but we *must* assume the responsibility for their quality." He took this responsibility seriously. His personal papers are replete with vivid descriptions of the natural world, and of the people around him. Always accurate, never critical, Jefferys explained to his fiancée, Callie West, in a letter in 1906, "I never give advice — I find the responsibility for myself about all I can manage. And one's own experience isn't of much use to another. . . ."

C.W. Jefferys always perceived his immediate surroundings through the veil of the past. This theme is apparent in this note from 1921:

> Sudden falls the night. But through the shrouded gloom that wraps our world slow rises the soft light of the moon, telling us that still beneath the far horizon shines on in undiminished strength and splendour, illuminating other spheres, the sun that lately lit our own. So does the moonlight of memory shed over our darkened lives the mellow reflected radiance of the past.

For Jefferys, the past was filled with people — people caught up in the events of their time, their characters and consequent actions recorded as history. Nature provided the necessary continuity, the link between the past and the present:

> Later in the night I awaken again, and with a shift of the wind, though the voice is the same, it has a different intonation. Now the Past seems to speak, and the waters call with multitudinous human voices. In the black night auditory ghosts speak through the Long Sault, in cries of drowning canoe men and sailors, in shouts of river drivers, and big-timber raftsmen, in voyageurs' chansons. Somewhere in this midnight song rise the hymns of Jesuit and Recollet and Sulpician; the war-whoops of Indian war parties




Art Gallery of Ontario

*Woodland Interior, 1921, watercolour on paper.*

Private Collection

*Clara (Callie) Jefferys at Last Mountain Lake, 1912. Watercolour on paper*

> ring out, the voices of the explorers call again across the waters which heard them years ago, Champlain, Brulé, Joliet, Dollier de Casson, Galinee, LaSalle, Marquette.
> . . . . How many, in the years, had heard as I do now, its slumbering song, the last sound before they fall asleep? In how many a dying ear has its failing murmur been the prelude of the endless requiem?

Jefferys' dedication to the past was consistent throughout his life. Born in Rochester, Kent, England in 1869, he emigrated with his family to Philadelphia in 1875, moving later to Hamilton, Ontario, and settling in Toronto in 1881. His interest in art appeared early, and he was remembered by contemporary students for his blackboard illustrations of the first Boer War. By 1888 he had become a member of the Toronto Art Students' League, and was becoming known as a talented illustrator. He was attracted to New York in the 1890s because of the business recession in Canada, and worked for most of that decade as an artist for the New York *Herald*, sketching fires, murderers, and the common events that illustrated a daily newspaper before the days of photojournalism. He returned to Canada permanently in 1901, after the death of his first wife, Jean Adams, and an infant son, but frequently revisited New York. He makes reference to such visits over the years with disquieting allusions, as in this letter to his second wife, Callie, in 1922:

> Such air as there is in New York has been pretty steadily on the move, a breeze every day or night; but I long for the keen clean north with a bit of sting in it and no illusive poetic haze that tries to hide man's handiwork as it does in N.Y. I'm fed up with rooftops and chimneys and ventilators, and I don't know whether it's worse to live in the bottom of a well, or suspended over the million exhalations of a big city. One feels like a God, on a roof garden, or in a skyscraper — mainly perhaps because of the constant incense that arises to you, and the scent of burnt offerings and sacrifices — that's probably what being a God is — it's an unenviable job, I should think.

And again, on the same prolonged research trip:

> I feel like a maggot in a cheese. Perhaps all civilization is only a sort of putrefaction which breeds

*Rocks of Georgian Bay, 1917. Watercolour on paper.*

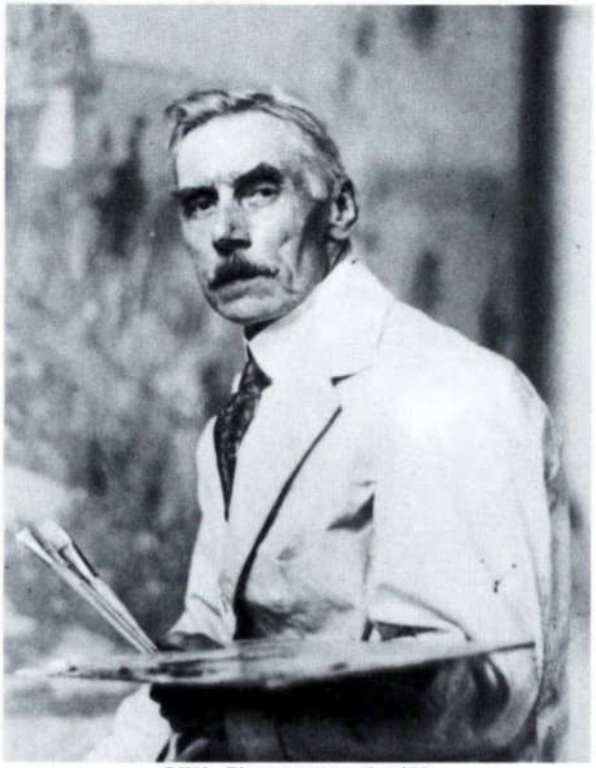
> and sustains these human worms and weevils: our cities perhaps are only the festering mass of a dead past which attract the human flies. A morbid and rather discouraging idea — it came into my head as I woke from a half-dream this morning, and gave me a bad hour, a sort of unreasoning terror which passed as suddenly as it came.

Jefferys overcame such melancholy by "doping" himself with work. The prodigious output of this disciplined artist is all the more impressive when considered within its temporal context: transportation to many historic sites was then difficult at best, accomplished by train, or bus, or occasionally by a hired car with driver, and by extensive walking.

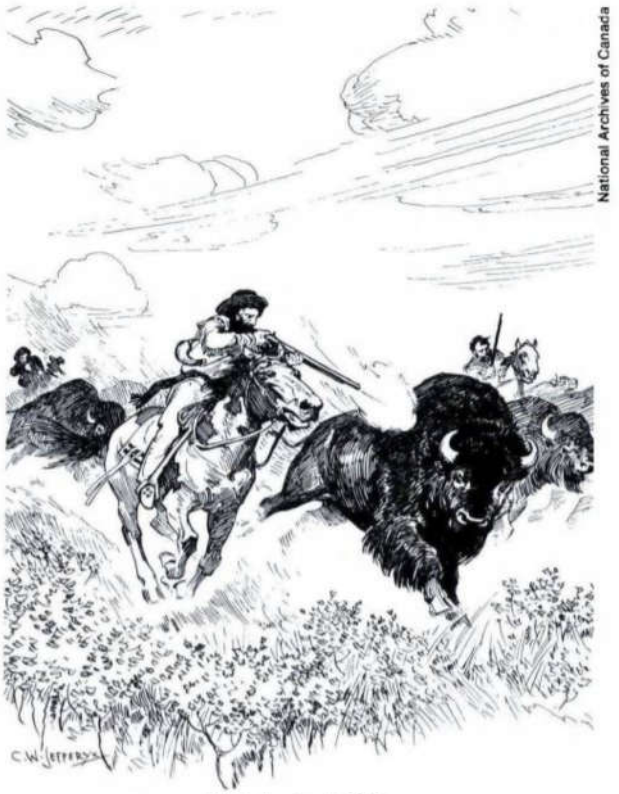
In the early years Jefferys' illustrative skill was too often applied to more pragmatic and profitable projects, such as in illustrating books and magazine stories, but his interest in historical research and the representation of the past was never left unattended for long. The thoroughness of his research technique is reflected in this letter to Callie in 1917, written while in Boston working on the *Chronicles of America* series, of which he was an editor, picture researcher and illustrator:

> I looked up the Peabody Museum and the Essex Institute, and saw a host of old relics of the seafaring days and early times of the town and its neighborhood. Pictures of old merchants and ship owners, sailing vessels, models of ships, log books, whaling implements, curiosities from Asia. Then there were fine old chairs, chests, tables, desks, chiffoniers and sofas, rooms fitted up with the old time furniture, a kitchen with open fireplace and dressers, a bedroom with a four poster bed and a parlor of the Colonial period — a "one hoss shay", sleighs, wagons, a lot of old time costumes on "judys", wedding dresses of 1830, old bonnets, hats, military uniforms, enough stuff to keep one sketching for a month.

Charles Jefferys and Callie (Clara) West of Winnipeg were married in 1907, formalizing a rich friendship which was to continue until her death in 1937. Their letters to each other over the years mirror their concern for each other, for their five daughters, and for the many friends and associates who were attracted to this busy, loving household in rural York Mills. (York Mills is on what is now north Yonge Street in Metropolitan Toronto.)



*C.W.J.: The artist at work, 1938.*



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*Métis hunting buffalo.*

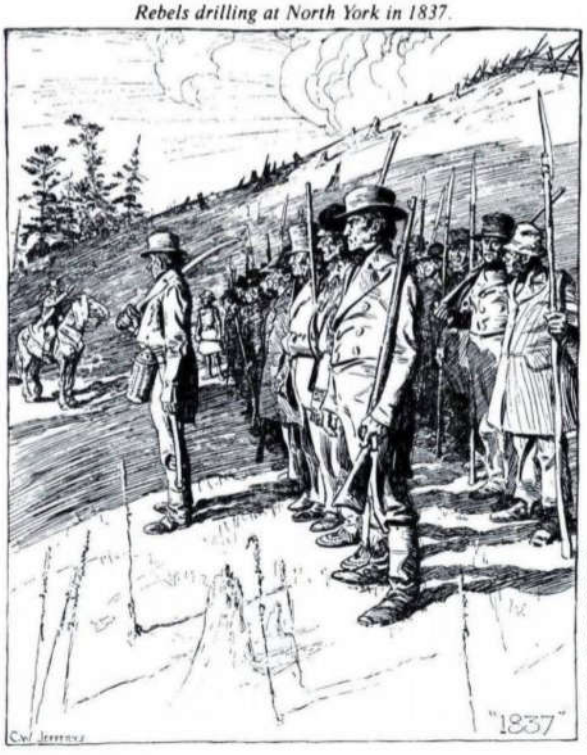
To Charles, Callie was a true comrade, a partner in all his undertakings, not the least of which was the raising of their large family. He was always quick to acknowledge her help:

> Nothing is accomplished without some kind of coöperation, and you, my own dear comrade, have always been my right hand support and I know, have brought that atmosphere into the household. It is a great blessing to have a home like that, and I hope that I will be able to repay such unity of feeling. . . . I am now cashing in to some extent on the time and study I have given, and I think the dividends will increase with the years. It has been slow and it has taken courage and patience and resolution — on your part, my dear, no less than my own — but in the meantime, we've lived and loved and on the whole, had a very happy, wide and growing life, and have missed few of the things that really count. May our future life bless you for it.

Their letters always ended with tender endearments, betraying a solicitous gentleness not immediately discernible in most photographs of Jefferys, the artist.

By 1924 Jefferys was fairly confident that his historical pictures were becoming profitable for him. The people in his drawings reveal their own humanity; their

*Rebels drilling at North York in 1837.*

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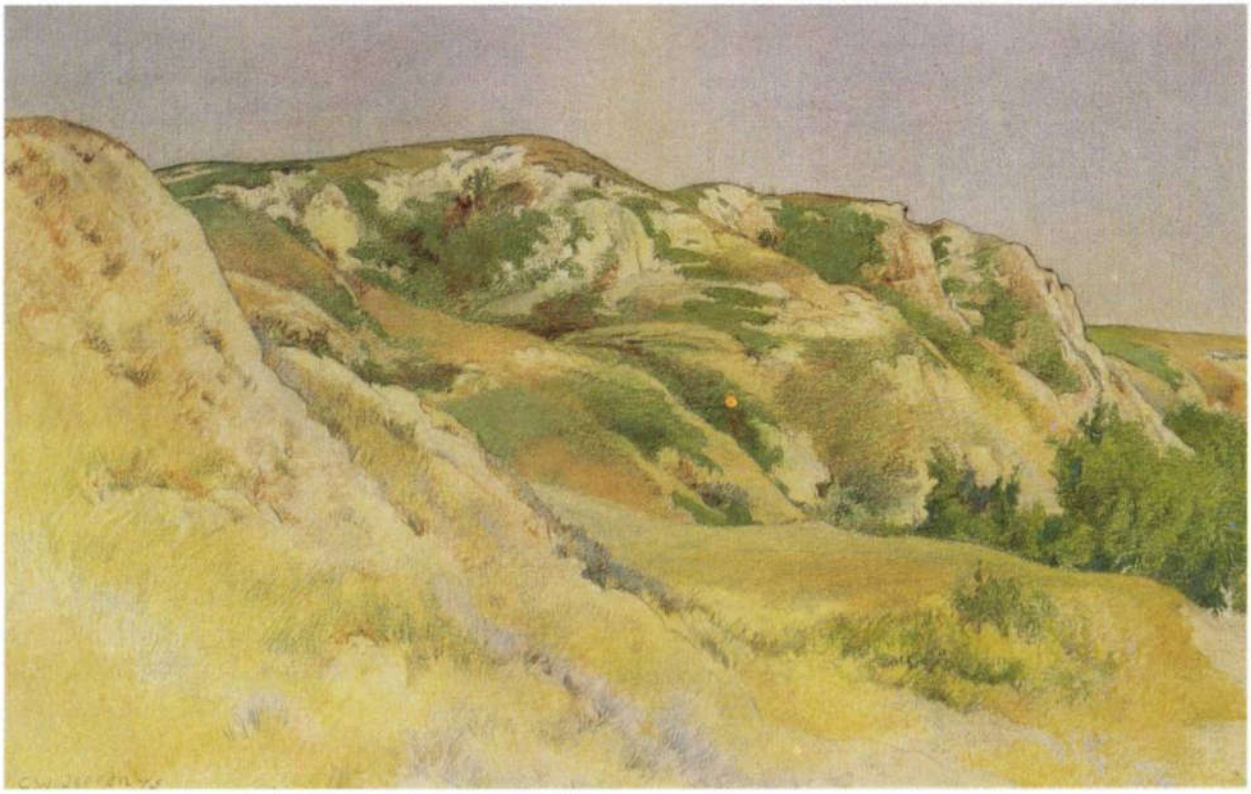


Private Collection

*Cutbank near Crowfoot's Grave, Blackfoot Crossing, Alberta. Coloured pencil on paper, 1924.*

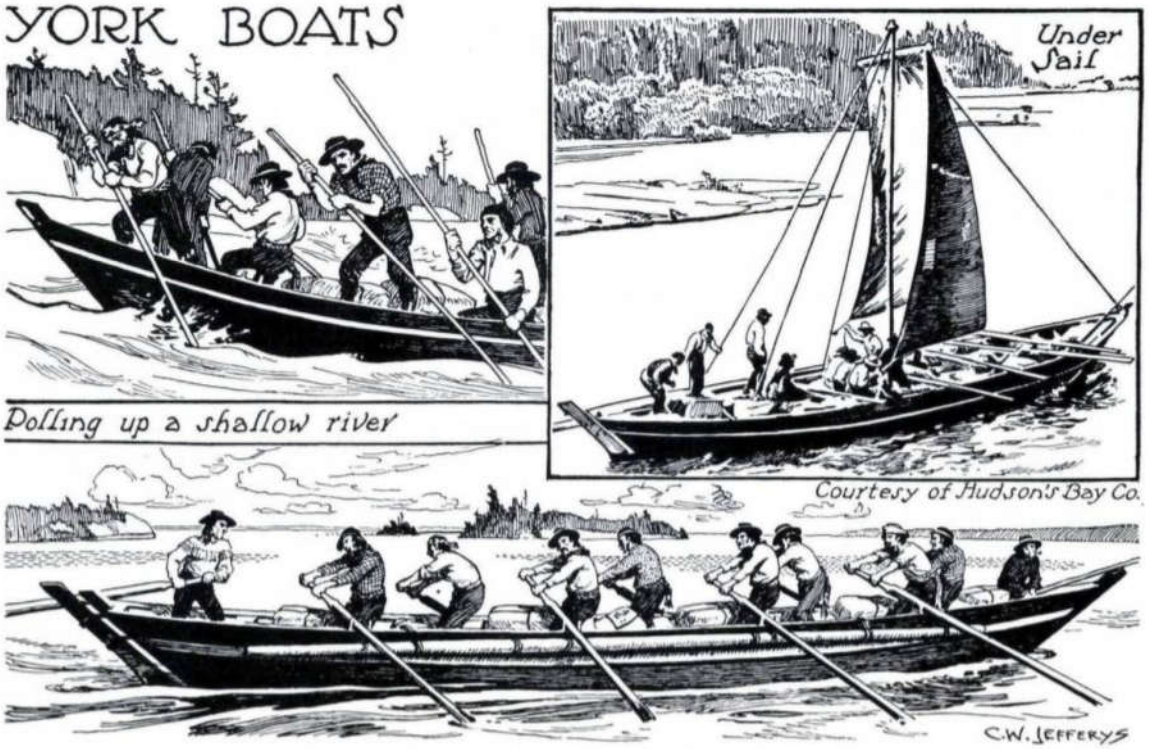
faces express terror, anger, or, sometimes, a twinkle of humour, as if they were already aware of the outcome of the event in the sketch.

Painstaking attention to detail is a hallmark of Jefferys' historical work, overwhelmingly established in the three volumes of *A Picture Gallery of Canadian History*, a collection of about 2,000 drawings covering almost 250 years of Canadian history. These books were published by Ryerson Press in 1942, 1948 and 1950. His account of his sketching a buffalo herd near Wainwright in 1924 in a letter to his wife reveals a determined and occasionally almost foolhardy commitment to accuracy:

> I've had a couple of days among the buffalo, right in among them, sketching quick notes, observing and taking snap-shots. I get the auto man to drive me out until we reach the animals, they are quite used to motors and generally don't move off very much. Then we stop and wait and they resume their feeding and roaming around us, paying no attention to our presence. Sometimes they are restless and we watch the direction in which they seem to be moving and cut across the prairie to intercept them; occasionally we have to give them a bit of a chase, but in general we try not to disturb them and when we have to, it is very instructive to watch their gallop. They can attain a wonderful speed very quickly, and the men who have worked at rounding them up say that the fleetest saddle horse can't overtake them when they get going. I have made only quick small sketches, for it is almost impossible to get any finished studies of them, and I want to study their action and character principally anyway, details can be got from photos. . . .

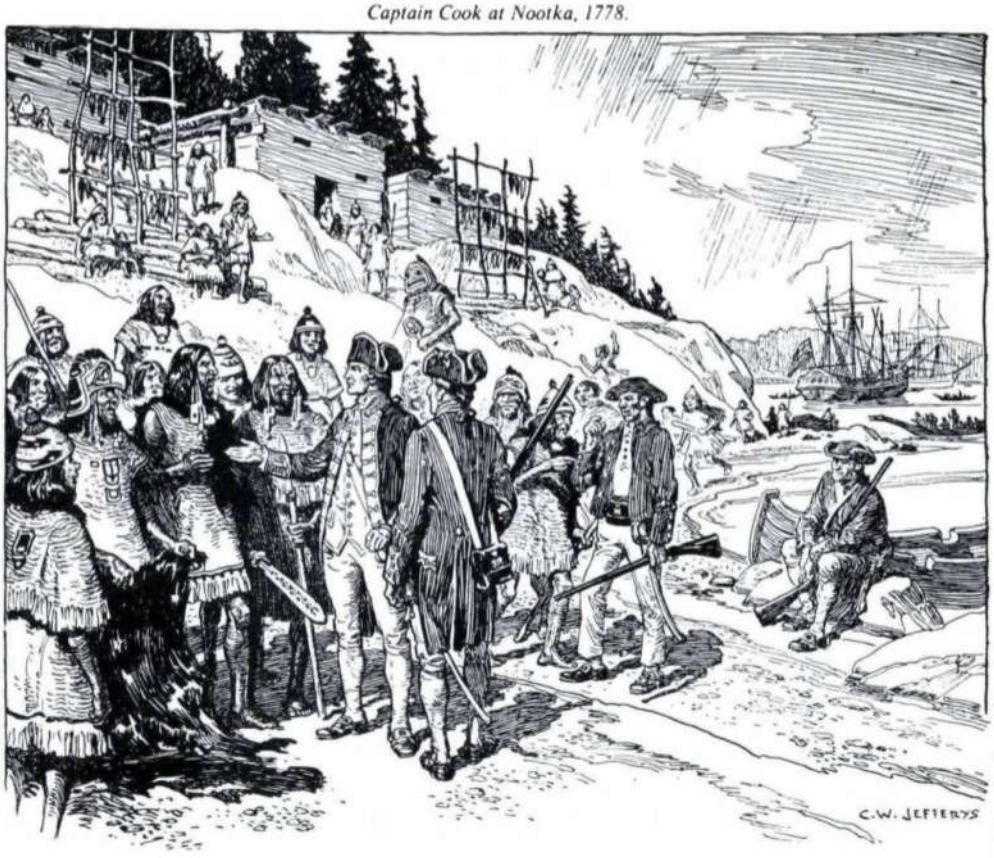
Accuracy to Jefferys meant being there. His notes and letters are full of rich description of historic sites, some quite remote and almost forgotten. He became convinced that his work would force subsequent historians to expand their coverage of the history of the West. In 1924 Jefferys spent two months recording the patterns of settlement and the battle-sites of the Riel Rebellion. This work served to stimulate an interest in the history of such places as Battleford:

> Here again I was on what might be called virgin soil, so far as pictorial historical purposes was concerned, for I know of no pictures of these places and but few references to the historical associations. Here was the beginning of local government in the Northwest Territories in 1877, this was the capital until 1882 when Regina was chosen. These modest buildings will form a striking contrast if shown alongside




*Sample illustration from "The Picture Gallery of Canadian History".*

*Captain Cook at Nootka, 1778.*

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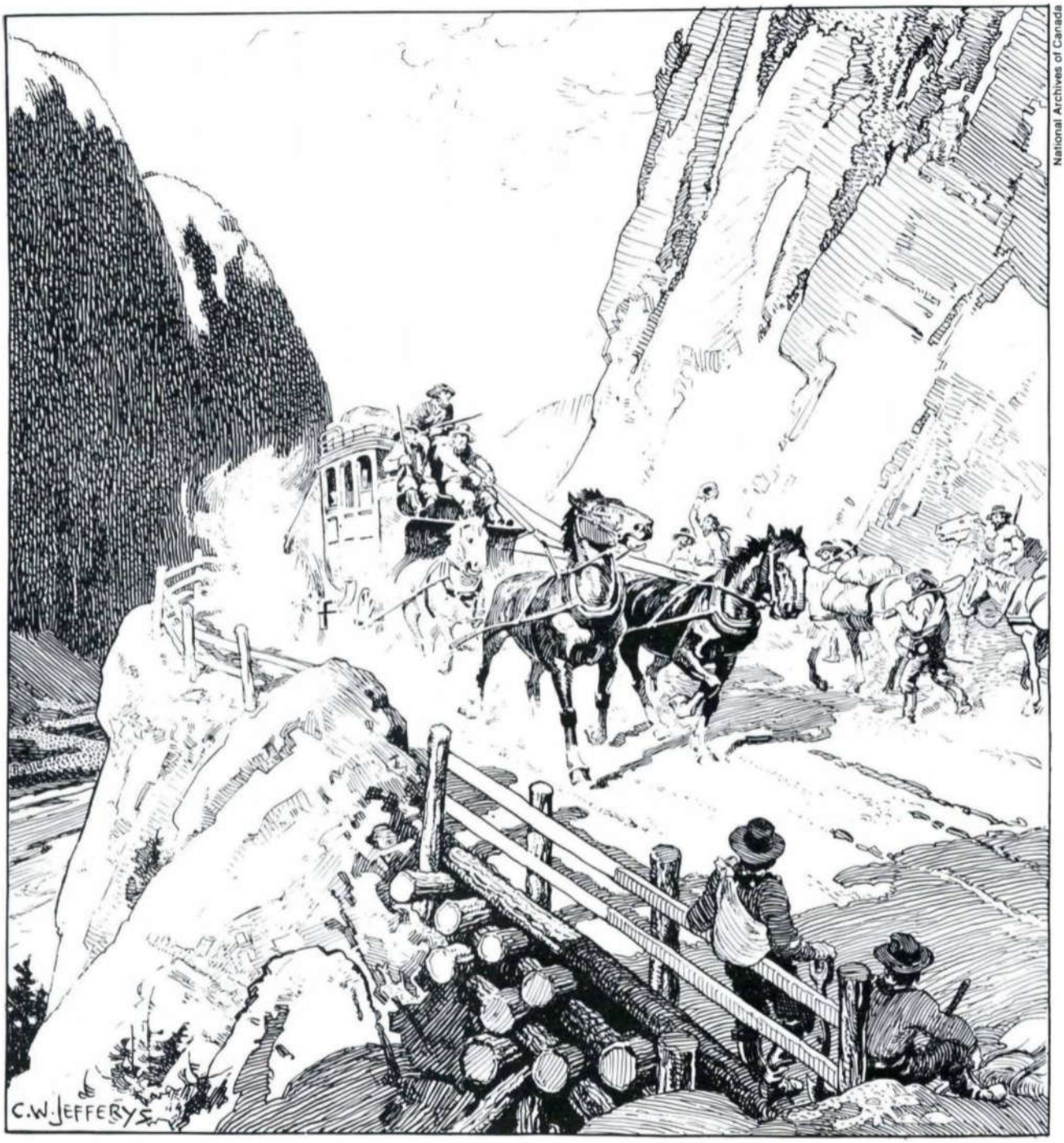


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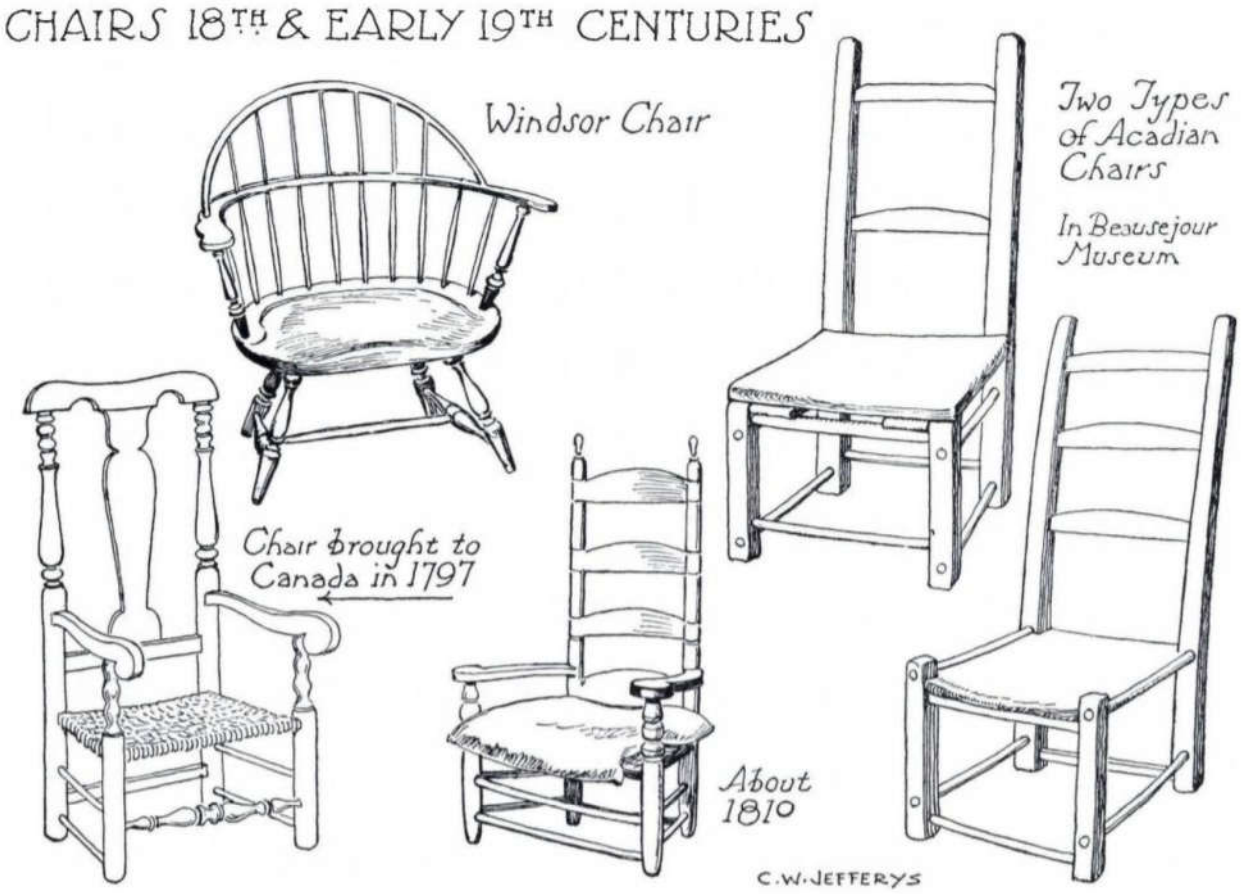
*On the Cariboo Road to the British Columbia gold fields.*




*The artist's concern for authentic detail led to thousands of drawings of ordinary objects such as chairs (above), door latches, tools, costumes, etc., many of which were reproduced in "The Picture Gallery of Canadian History".*

the imposing legislative buildings of Alberta and Saskatchewan of today. There is, I think, a subject for a good illustrated article here. In addition to this, there is, of course the interest of the Rebellion period. I made a drawing showing where the Queen's Own camped on their arrival for the relief of Battleford. I shall be interested in showing this to Professor Needler, who served in this campaign as a Queen's Own private, and doubtless he can give me much useful information based on these drawings.

Some of the people who had been part of the fabric of Western history were still about in 1924, and Jefferys sought them out, checking the accuracy of his observations and research against their memories.

As well as providing an extensive collection of historical material, this last of four expeditions to the Canadian West awakened a new sense of light and colour in Jefferys' landscape painting; ". . . a new look at the prairies has given me a new technique I think, one that will express the mingled grace and austerity of the country in a more definite way than I've ventured on before."

These parallel threads of the representations of past events and of their settings in the present provided a complementary balance in his work. His colleagues Lawren Harris and A.Y. Jackson had visited Jasper National Park in search of landscape subjects that same year, and ". . . were not overly enthusiastic, though they found some material above the timber line near Maligne Lake, but they characterize much of the landscape as picture post card type. This is true, though scarcely fair to the scenery, which after all exists for other purposes than O.S.A. [Ontario Society of Artists] exhibitions."

This wry humour often appears in letters to his family. In learning that in his absence a housekeeper had been engaged by his wife to help her with the care of the household and their five children, his advice reveals a twinkle:

*C.W. Jefferys, his wife Callie and two of their daughters, 1913.*

> Don't let Miss Calder see you smoking or she will be afraid to stay in such a wicked house; perhaps you had better lock up any "improper" books that may be lying around. If necessary go to the Baptist Church some Sunday morning — anything to keep her on the job.

His five daughters by his two wives brought him much pleasure; two of them became artists under his tutelage. His letter to young Katherine when she was off at the Muskoka cottage of Jefferys' brother, Walter, for the summer betrays a tenderness that is not often acknowledged in the meager biographical material currently available about this artist:

> I have just packed up your doll; I hope it's the one you wanted, and that it will reach you safely. It's quite a long journey for a baby to make by herself.

His letters, only recently added to the collection of the E.P. Taylor Reference Library of the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, reveal a person of unusual sensitivity to his surroundings, a man who persisted in his work despite little pecuniary or personal recognition for many years. As he observed in some undated notes:

> Sensitive vanity of musicians, or musical performers, and actors as contrasted with the *comparative* indifference to applause of painters, draughtsmen, architects, and, to a certain extent, authors. Success to the former is dependent upon the immediate response; the last note has scarcely ceased to reverberate before the handclapping and the "bravo" burst forth, the last word of the speech is merged in the laughter or the sigh of the theatre. The verdict is given at once. The latter learn patience; recognition comes, if it comes at all, slowly; and long after the performance.

Always active in Canadian art circles, which centred in Toronto during the first decades of the century, Jefferys was a president, if not a founding member, of the Ontario Society of Artists and the Arts and Letters Club. As the years went by he became well known, and received an honourary doctorate from Queen's University in 1931. His beloved wife and partner, Callie, died in 1937, but Jefferys continued to work in his studio, a converted barn behind the house on North Yonge Street. A daughter, Betsy, and her husband, moved in to help him, and lived with him until his death in 1951. The studio is no longer there, but the house remains: it is one of the last houses on Yonge Street — you can see it tucked in between two skyscrapers just south of the 401. The real and intellectual property of C.W. Jefferys continues to appreciate, and as he observed around 1900, "Everything in life is to be paid for; some pay in advance, some on the credit system (most of us), and some few, as we go, do a cash business with Fate."

The work of Charles William Jefferys has provided faces, and even personalities to many historical figures who would otherwise languish in the repository of our minds as names only, lacking character or personal identity. As a meticulous historical artist, Jefferys has given us pictures of our own history which have enriched the education of generations. A knowledge of the man himself makes this legacy more valuable. His acerbic wit and keen observation of his own life ripple through his art and his personal writing. "You see", he once wrote "life is its own and only reward, and punishment."

Charles and Callie Jefferys rest in the churchyard on the hill just behind their house on Yonge Street. Appropriately, an official historic plaque stands on the lawn in their front yard. ♦

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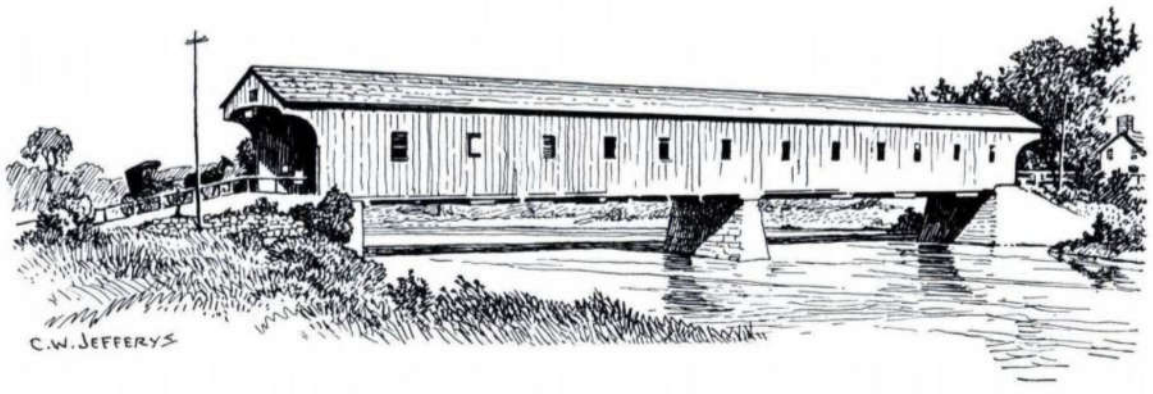
*Nancy Gibson is an Alberta writer.*
*The C.W. Jefferys signature that appears with the title on page 6 is used with permission of the C.W. Jefferys Estate Archive, Toronto.*



# Nightmare on the Great Western, 1857

By Ian C. Johnson

Shortly before 4:00 P.M. on Thursday, 12 March 1857, a gentleman in Toronto was running late. He had concluded his business in the city and now had only a few minutes to catch the train to Hamilton leaving from the Great Western Railway terminal at the foot of Yonge Street. Thinking that he could just make it, he hailed a cab, tipped the cabman handsomely to gallop, and hastened on his way.

At about the same time, William Jenkins, the foreman of the Great Western locomotive department at Toronto, stood examining the engine *Oxford* which was to pull the Hamilton-bound train that day. The *Oxford* had just completed six weeks in the shop, undergoing an extensive overhaul, so Jenkins was not overly concerned about its state of repair. Nonetheless, he proceeded with the inspection, stating later that he found the engine "to be in proper working order". Unknown to him, hidden from view, the axle on the front truck of the engine had developed a dangerous crack.

About one hundered other people gathered at the station that March afternoon and boarded the train

that now consisted of the *Oxford*, her tender, one baggage car and two first-class passenger cars. Although it had been a warm spring day, the conductors lit the stoves in each of the cars, providing both passengers and crew with some warmth as evening approached. Finally, at the scheduled time of 4:10 P.M., 29-year-old engineer Alexander Burnfield opened the *Oxford*'s throttle and eased the train out of the station.

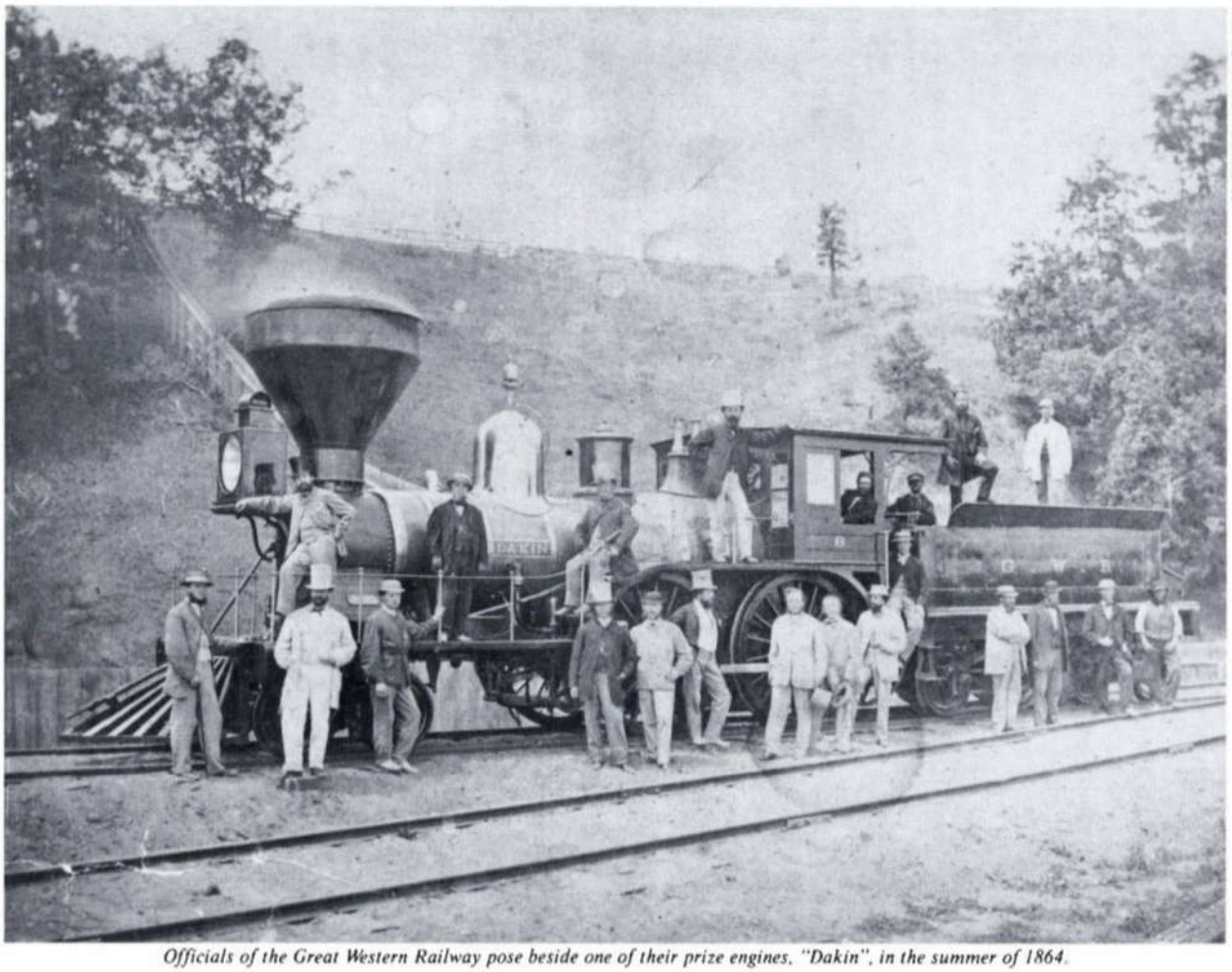
A few minutes later, the cabman reined in his galloping horse and deposited an angry and frustrated gentleman on the sidewalk outside the now empty terminal. A few hours later the gentleman would count this as the luckiest day of his life.

The line on which he hoped to travel was owned by the Great Western Railway Company. This company had been incorporated in 1834, but had lain dormant for over ten years until Sir Allan Napier MacNab became a director. MacNab, (best remembered for Dundurn Castle, his magnificent home in Hamilton), journeyed to England in 1845 and there found the requisite financing to start construction of a railroad that would link Toronto, Hamilton, Niagara, London and Detroit. The line finally opened in 1853 and continued in business for almost 30 years until it was swallowed up by the Grand Trunk Railway in 1882, which in turn became part of Canadian National in 1923.

The route the *Oxford* and her cars followed wound west along the north shore of Lake Ontario with stops that included Port Credit, Oakville, Waterdown, and Wellington Square (now Burlington) with passengers boarding and departing at each stop. At Oakville, two young women, Ellen Devine and her sister Mary, aged 20 and 15 respectively, climbed aboard for the brief trip to Hamilton to visit their brother. Leaving their home below Port Nelson earlier in the day, they had said goodbye to their parents Michael and Rose, who probably had no concerns about letting the girls go on such a short journey.

Few on board that day would have had any concerns either. While the Great Western Railway had its share of accidents, and the company was often accused of rushing construction ahead at the price of safety, by and large rail travel on a Great Western train was reasonably safe.

As the train neared Hamilton, baggageman Edward Sevier dozed quietly in the baggage car while his friend Henry Urquart, the expressman, busied himself with the trunks and cases to be unloaded at Hamilton. In the cab of the engine, fireman George Knight of Windsor, a boy of only 18, tended the firebox as Burnfield slowed the train to approach the switch at the Desjardins Junction. It was now about 5:50. At the junction switch, where the tracks from the main line from London and Detroit joined the branch line coming from




National Archives of Canada

*Officials of the Great Western Railway pose beside one of their prize engines, "Dakin", in the summer of 1864.*

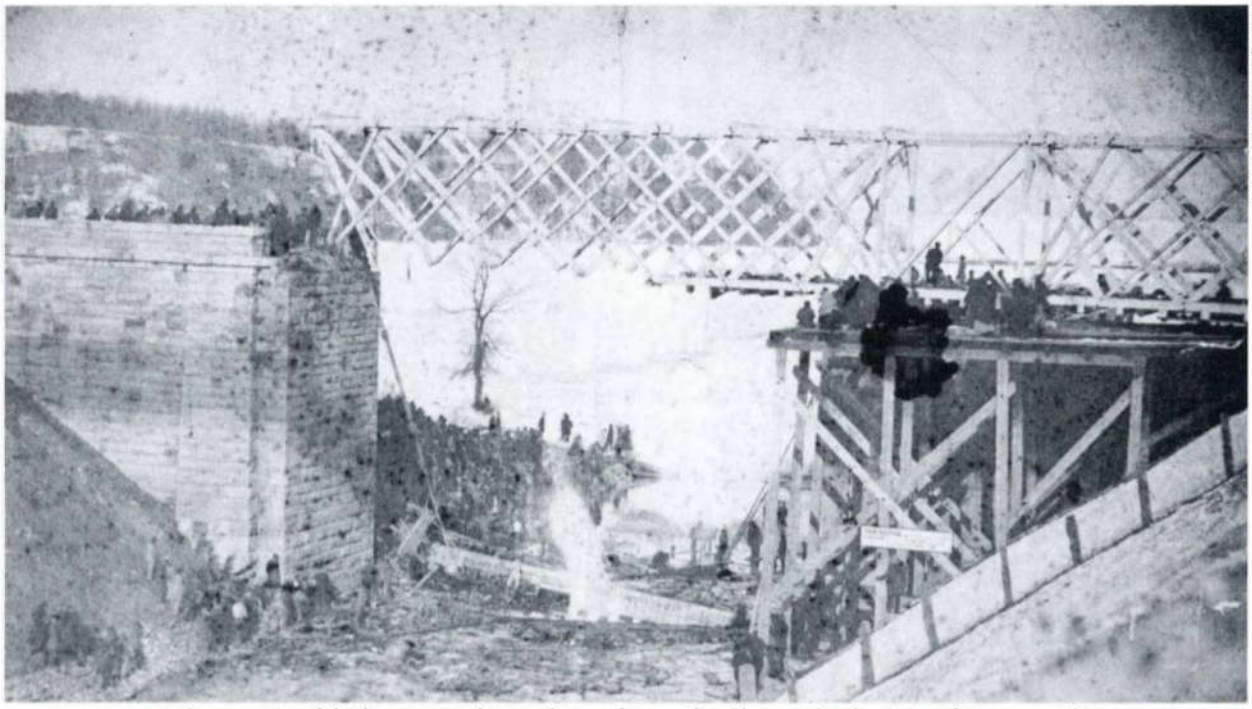
Toronto, Thomas Tribute, one of the two switchmen on duty, swung the switch open to allow the train to pass.

Tribute had come on duty a few minutes early, in order that the other switchman at the junction, David Crombie, could catch the passing train and ride it home to Hamilton at the end of his shift. Crombie and Tribute stood watching as the train approached at about 6 or 7 miles per hour, passed over the switch without incident, and continued on towards the wooden swing bridge over the Desjardins Canal.

As the train passed, Crombie leapt aboard the last car. Clinging there precariously for a moment, with just one foot on the stairs, he suddenly felt a sharp jolt and heard a loud blast of the engine's whistle. Looking forward, he saw that the engine was falling through the bridge.

The bridge was a wooden structure, built by the Great Western to cross the Desjardins Canal at Burlington Heights. Of a swinging design, it could be swung laterally through 90 degrees on a turntable at one end to allow clearance for the masts of ships plying the canal some 60 feet below. The bridge was one of a pair built at that point by the railway under an agreement with the Desjardins Canal Company, the other being a higher suspension bridge used by pedestrian and carriage traffic. (The canal itself, over which the two structures passed, was a product of the imagination of Pierre Desjardins, a French emigré and civil engineer, and joined Burlington Bay on Lake Ontario to the town of Dundas, then a thriving commercial centre in Canada West.)

But now the swing bridge was collapsing. As Crombie watched aghast the engine and tender plunged through the timbers on the bottom of the bridge and plummeted into the ice-covered canal below carrying Burnfield and Knight to their deaths. In the baggage car, Sevier was roused by the crash and looked out the open door on the right just in time to see Burnfield throw up his hands in a vain attempt to jump clear. Sevier was now wide awake. As he stated rather laconically in a later interview with the Hamilton *Spectator*,



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*A salt paper print of the disaster scene by an unknown photographer. Photography, then in its infancy, was used in the Desjardins Canal tragedy as a means of identifying the dead.*

he thought, "it was time to get off." Quickly, he leapt out the open door and came to rest on his back not more than a foot from the brink.

As the baggage car crashed into the canal, carrying poor Urquart to his death, Crombie also recognized what was about to happen and jumped clear of his perch on the stairs, yelling to others on the rear platform to do the same. A number did, saving themselves.

The two passenger cars continued to roll on towards the parapet. Due to the slow speed of the train, the passengers in both cars now had a few seconds to comprehend what was happening and many acted accordingly. People leapt up and crowded the aisles in an attempt to get out, pushing and shoving to reach the doors at the end of the cars. Unfortunately, for most, there was not enough time.

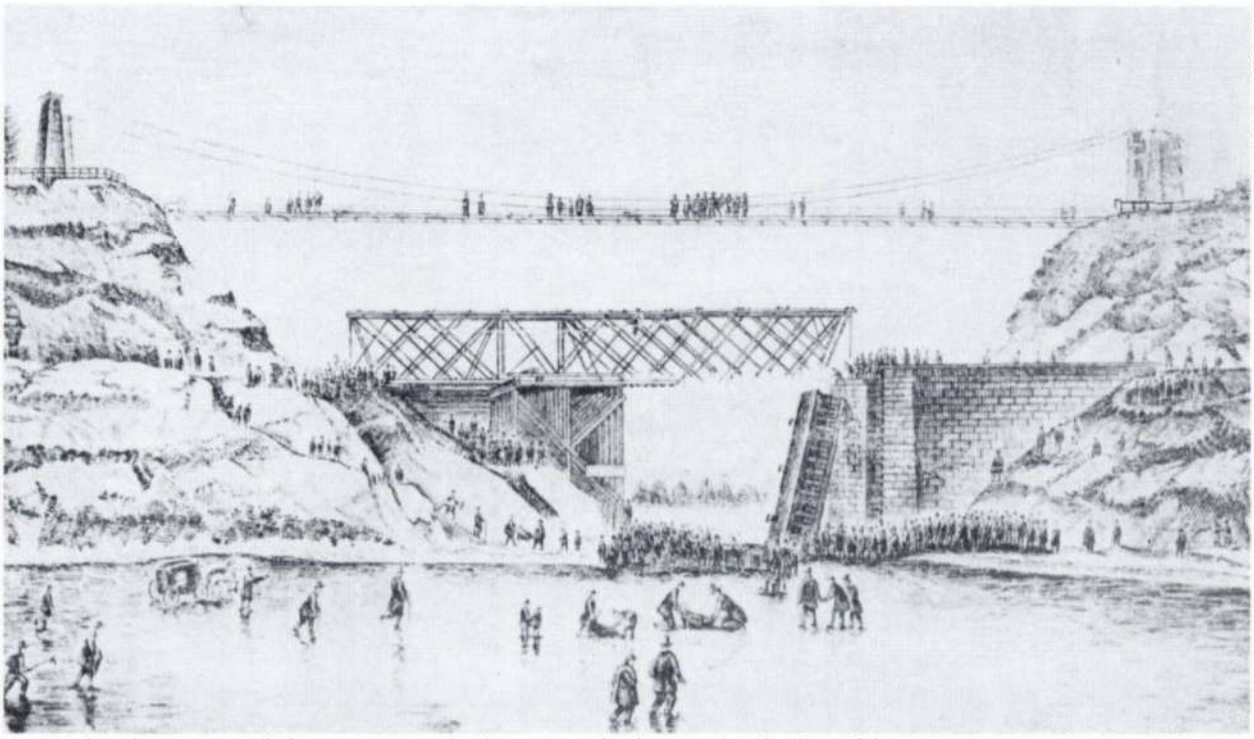
One who did escape was Richard Jessup, the Travelling Auditor for the Great Western. He was sitting in the last passenger car and, after the train passed over the switch, he felt an unusual motion which caused him to look up. Through the door at the front of the car, he observed the conductor, Edward Barrett, vainly trying to pull the pin on the coupling. When he saw Barrett give up and jump off, Jessup decided something was gravely amiss and scrambled out the rear door, leaping to the ground and safety.

Joining him was William K. Muir, the Assistant Superintendent of the railway who had been sitting near Jessup in the last seat of the last car. When he perceived a jerking motion in the train, he got up and looked out the rear door just in time to see Crombie holding up his hands and yelling at him to jump. With the car beginning to fall, Muir jumped, landing only a few feet from the edge of the canal.

Far below, the engine and tender had crashed through the ice and disappeared to the bottom. The baggage car did likewise, but the first passenger car somersaulted as it went over and ended up lying on its roof, half submerged in the frigid water. The last car plunged end down into the canal, leaving its hind end resting against the eastern pier of the bridge.

Miraculously, many in the cars survived the impact. One was Edwin Richardson, an off duty conductor, who, like Sevier, had lain asleep in the baggage car at the time of the accident. He stated later that he awoke to feel hot ashes from the stove flying about him and then water rushing into the compartment. Although he was suffering a serious injury to his back, he managed to kick out a window and swim out to safety.

Upon crashing into the ice below, seats, burning stoves and passengers were flung forward to the end of the cars. Many died instantly from their injuries or were burned to death by the stoves and their contents. Others, at least in the forward car, survived initial injury only to be drowned in the icy water that flooded in. But even here, some survived.



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*Crowds gather to assist with the rescue or to gawk. The caption under the original reads: "View of the railway disaster at Hamilton, C.W. on Thursday Evn. March 12th 1857. Sold by G.E. Pell, Printseller, Looking Glass and Picture Frame Manufacturer. Drawn & Lith. by H. Gregory, Hamilton, C.W. from a Daguerreotype by D.N. Preston."*

John Clare, a merchant from Hamilton, was one. In the first car at the time of the accident, he found himself bent and almost sitting on the roof of the car, pinned by the weight of the stove, still hot and hissing in the rising water close by his head. Somehow Clare managed to throw off the heavy weight of the stove and move to a broken window near the end of the coach where he scrambled out. Sadly, his two-year-old daughter, Mahaly, who had been on the seat next to him, was later found among the dead.

Another survivor, John Smith, of Livonia, Michigan, was riding near the front of the rear car, and had perceived the danger as the car neared the brink. Quickly, he had made his way to the back of the car and grasped an overhead hook, probably saving his life. After the impact at the bottom, he was pinned down by the dead and dying at the fore end of the car with water up to his neck. He was rescued after a short time and the *Spectator* reported that, "On being carried to the hotel, he was so chilled from being in the icy water that it was a long time before he could be made comfortable."

In all, about 35 people jumped off, escaped or were rescued, while 59 others died immediately in the crash.

In Hamilton, the city was galvanized. Workmen from the depot and railway shops situated close to the scene rushed to lend assistance. Men, women and children from the city ran along the track or crossed the ice on the bay to gawk or offer whatever aid they could. A reporter from the Hamilton *Spectator* stood at the scene and watched as one rescuer braved the icy water for over two hours. He wondered in the next edition, "Who was that noble fellow that every one must have seen, stripped to his shirt sleeves standing up to his middle in the freezing water, who, himself a best, did more than all the rest? We watched him long from the height above as he hewed away the fragments, and extricated the bodies. If ever a man deserves a reward, it is he." A few days later the paper noted that "the noble fellow" was Alexander Middlemis, a carpenter for the railroad. With the aid of torches and a full moon, the rescue and recovery work continued throughout the night and the following day so that by Friday evening most of the bodies had been recovered.

By that time, Hamilton coroners Dr. H.B. Bull and Dr. J.W. Roseburgh had established a temporary morgue in one of the large baggage rooms at the Great Western station and sworn in a jury to investigate the cause of the disaster. In a reminiscence, Adam Brown, later an M.P. from Hamilton and Director of Canada Life Assurance, recalled being selected for the jury: "Like others, I rushed to the scene of the accident across the ice and before I knew very much about it, I was named as one of the jury at the Coroner's Inquest." However, his employer at the time took a dim view of losing an apprentice to jury duty and Brown

had to appeal "to the Coroner, who found he could let me out because one of the bodies had been removed without me seeing it and the rest of the jury had."

Meanwhile, the Managing Director of the Great Western took the novel step of arranging to have a local photographer, R. Milne, and his assistants photograph the unidentified bodies. The March 16th *Spectator* lauded this undertaking, "so that months or years hence, if any of the deceased should remain so long not identified, their friends may recognize them." Undoubtedly this was one of the first times such a use was made in Canada of the new art of photography.

Over the next several days almost all the bodies of the dead were removed by relatives and friends. The remains of the two Devine sisters were claimed by their brother, who "ignorant of the catastrophe, came to meet them and his anguish at the unexpected sight of the corpses was very great." The body of Captain James Sutherland, former captain and part-owner of the Lake Ontario steamer *Magnet*, was taken away by his former shipmates, presumably at the direction of his widow. The remains of Samuel Zimmerman were claimed by his widow and removed to Niagara. This gentleman had been one of the greatest railway contractors in Canada West and his funeral the following Monday was reported as being "wholly unexampled in this Province, as far as relates to the number of those who participated in the melancholy duties and the grandeur of the display." The number of people who turned out was stated as being "not less than ten thousand", which, even allowing for literary licence, must have been immense.

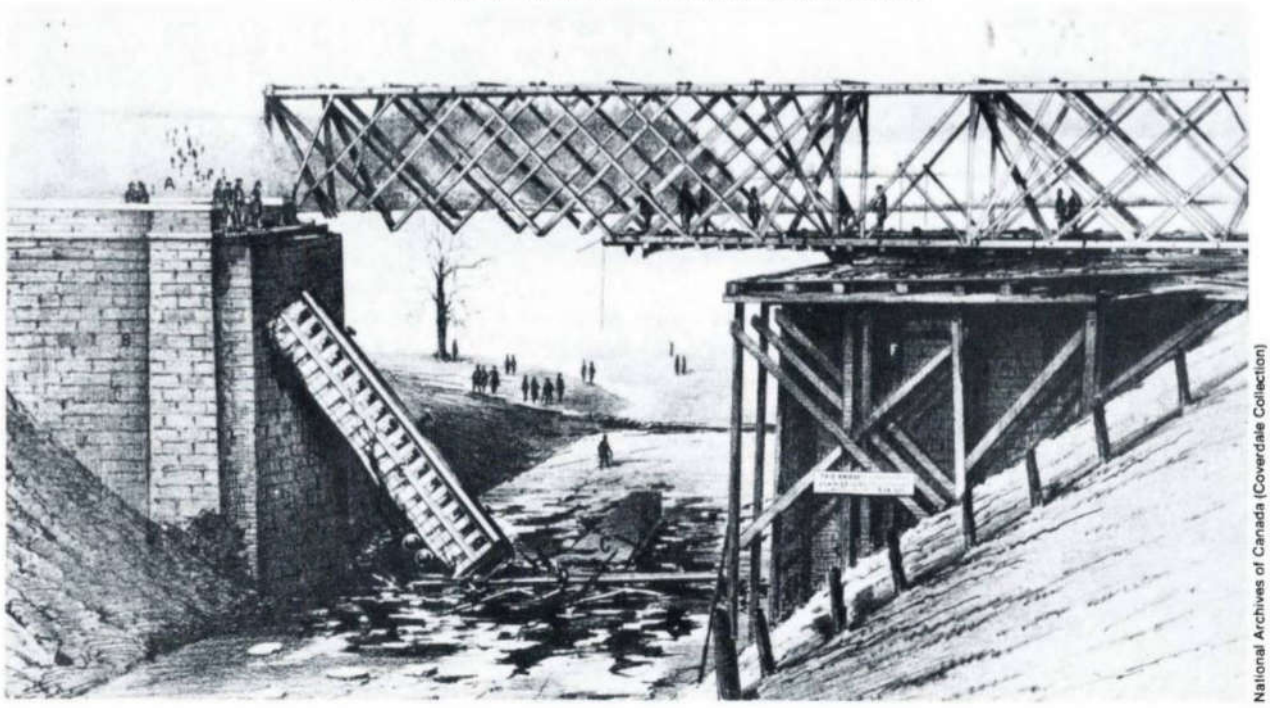
The funerals, public and private, great and small, continued in the week following the accident. In Toronto, Parliament was adjourned on the Monday, while in Hamilton a day of mourning was declared as people in the city turned out *en masse* for the funerals and church services.

At this time, the exact cause of the accident was still unknown. Speculation ran high in some of the more reckless newspapers that the bridge was faulty in design and construction. Certainly that was in the minds of most people. Britton Osler, a resident in nearby Dundas, wrote to his brother Fen in Barrie that: "Folk about here, and Hamilton, think that it [the accident] was entirely caused by the timbers of the bridge not being strong enough. In fact, they were made of not the best of pine scantlon."

With the help of Stephen Richards, a barrister appointed by the Crown, the coroner's jury lost no time in convening. Charged with inquiring into how Donald Stuart, a prominent Hamilton alderman, and others came to meet their deaths, it heard its first witness on the Saturday only two days after the accident.

One of the most pressing items of business was the recovery and examination of the locomotive, then still resting at the bottom of the canal. In a letter to the *Spectator* on 16 March one reader sensibly urged that

*Lithograph of the disaster published by the Hamilton "Morning Banner", printed by J. Sage & Sons, Buffalo, N.Y., from an ambrotype photograph by R. Milne of Hamilton, Canada West.*



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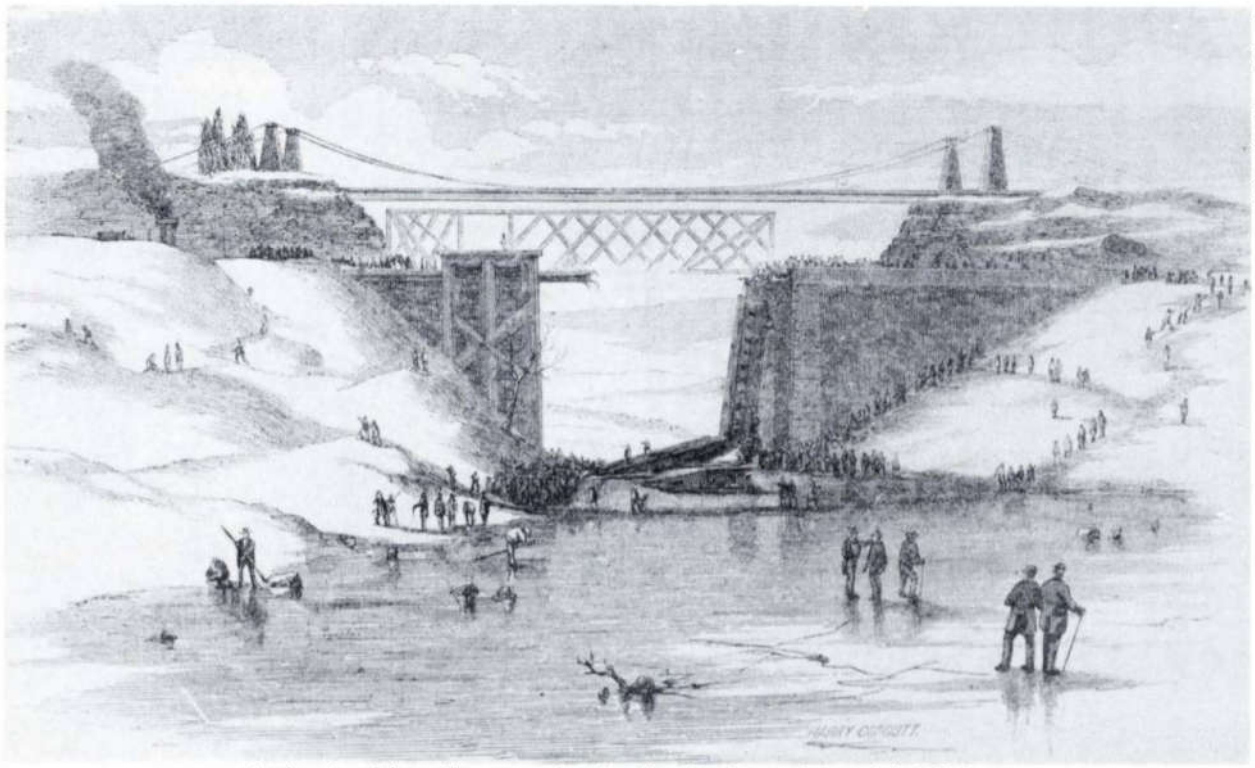

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*Another view of the accident as seen from Hamilton Bay, from a photograph by D.C. Beere. The view appeared in "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper" on 4 April 1857.*

"the Railway Company secure the services of one or two divers in submarine armour to explore the bottom of the canal at the scene of the accident." In the event, a diminutive Irishman, Luke Brennan, was employed to dive naked into the frigid water to secure ropes on the engine and other pieces of debris. He made several unassisted dives for payment of only 25 cents, prompting one wit to observe, "The enemies of Luke Brennan can never say he valued his life too highly." When the engine was finally raised onto a scow, the coroner's jury clustered around it "like a flock of bees round a hive" to see the broken axle and other evidence that pointed convincingly to the engine having left the tracks some distance before coming on the bridge.

The inquest continued with the jury meeting on at least 14 different days and hearing the evidence of some 28 witnesses. Finally, on 8 April it rendered its verdict. It determined that the accident resulted from the "breaking of the swing bridge over the said Canal" and "that the immediate cause was owing to the breaking of the forward axle of the engine-truck close to the wheel on the right, at a point on the road not ascertained, in consequence of which the left forward wheel of the truck left the rail at or near the switch causing the locomotive when entering the bridge to diverge to the right, crushing and tearing away its supports, and precipitating the whole train into the canal, the resulting calamity which forms the subject of this melancholy inquiry."

The jury went on to vindicate the railway, finding that the engine had been properly inspected prior to its journey and that the bridge over the canal was of sufficient strength "for the conveyance of the traffic on the line safely and securely". The jury did, however, make two recommendations: first, that a permanent bridge, presumably of iron, be constructed over the canal and, second, that the former practice of having the engine stop before proceeding over any bridge be reinstated.

The first recommendation was taken to heart by the railway and an iron bridge was eventually built over the canal a few years later. No action was taken with regard to the second. Not surprisingly, however, it was reported that many passengers on the line would only traverse the Desjardins bridge on foot.

For the passengers directly involved in the disaster, the final act was played out on the night of 2 April when one of their number, a certain Mr. McCollum, died around midnight. This brought the final death toll to 60 and closed the curtain on what was one of the greatest Canadian disasters of the nineteenth century. ♦

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*Writer Ian C. Johnson lives in Durham, Ontario.*

# STEAMBOATS IN THE ICE

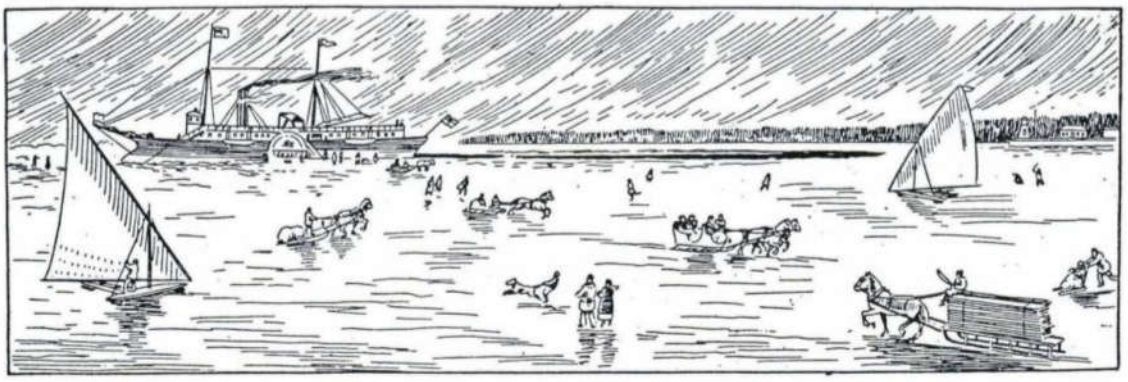
By Walter Lewis

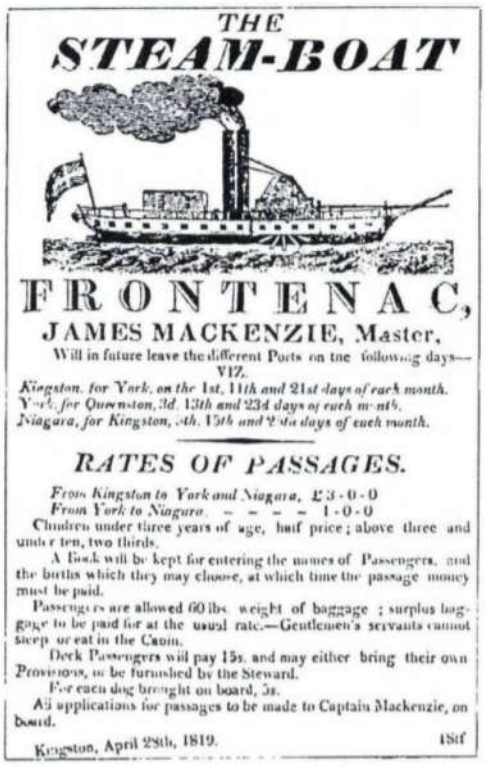
*Old winter is once more upon us, and our inland seas are "dreary and inhospitable wastes" to the merchant and to the traveller . . . The splashing wheels are silenced, the roar of steam is hushed — the gay saloon, so lately thronged with busy life, is now but an abandoned hall — and the cold snow revels in solitary possession of the untrodden deck.*

Abandoned steamers, "deserted wharves" lined with a "blasted forest" of bare masts — such were the images haunting T.C. Keefer as he began to write his influential pamphlet, *The Philosophy of Railroads* in 1849. Business, lamented Keefer, "is suspended, the life blood of commerce is curdled and stagnant . . . blockaded and imprisoned by Ice and Apathy". Keefer, of course, had found a solution — railroads. Others before him had struggled with the same problem. One of them, John Hamilton, thought he too had a solution — winter steamboat navigation. A richer man by far than Keefer, Hamilton had not bothered to write pamphlets on the subject. Instead he commissioned a steamboat to test the practicality of the idea — the *Traveller.*

Hamilton's first stake in the steamboat business on the Great Lakes had come on one of Keefer's cold, deserted wharves in Kingston at a mid-January auction. Hamilton was the highest bidder for the ten-year-old *Frontenac*, the first Canadian steamboat on the Great Lakes. His career as a steamboat entrepreneur lasted thirty-six years until, late in the winter of 1861, in the face of unrelenting competition from Keefer's railroads and an extended economic downturn, Hamilton went bankrupt. Even then, he was retained for a number of years as the general manager of the line he had once owned. In between, Hamilton was one of the most innovative of steamboat proprietors, commissioning some of the most remarkable vessels on the Great Lakes. In 1830 the *Great Britain* had revolutionized the design of lakes steamboats. Impatient with the delays in the construction of the St. Lawrence canals, Hamilton ordered the *Ontario*, designed to climb up through the Long Sault rapids. In 1846, the *Passport* became the first commercial iron-hulled vessel on the lakes. And nine years after that the *Kingston* came to epitomize the notion of the "floating palace" (and indeed carried the Prince of Wales on the royal tour in 1860). Each represented a vast sum of money, risked by one individual in the lakes trades. But none of these were as daring as the *Traveller.*

For Hamilton, much more than for Keefer, the long course of winter represented a major problem. As a shipowner, Hamilton's revenue ceased completely every November and did not resume until some point in April or May the next year. Since very few of his letters have survived, Hamilton's inspiration can only be inferred. But one coincidence is particularly worthy of notice. Captain John Ross of the Royal Navy had published *A Treatise on Navigation by Steam* in 1828,





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*Kingston, for York, on the 1st, 11th and 21st days of each month.*
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Children under three years of age, half price; above three and under ten, two thirds.

A Book will be kept for entering the names of Passengers, and the births which they may choose, at which time the passage money must be paid.

Passengers are allowed 60 lbs. weight of baggage; surplus baggage to be paid for at the usual rate.—Gentlemen's servants cannot sleep or eat in the Cabin.

Deck Passengers will pay 15s. and may either bring their own Provisions, to be furnished by the Steward.

For each dog brought on board, 5s.

All applications for passages to be made to Captain Mackenzie, on board.

Kingston, April 28th, 1819. 18tf

and the next year disappeared into the Arctic on a small paddlewheel steamer, the *Victory*. The account of his adventures, the *Narrative of the Second Voyage of Captain Ross to the Arctic Regions*, was published in 1834, shortly after his return to Britain. Subsequent controversy ensured world wide awareness of Ross's voyage. While the *Victory*'s performance could scarcely be called spectacular, what would have captured John Hamilton's attention was that a paddlewheeler had operated in the icy waters of the Arctic. Could the same be done on Lake Ontario?

If it could, it would not be done with the steamboats currently operating on the lake. Even the *Great Britain*, a remarkable steamboat, was not a particularly good rough-weather sailor. In general, the steamers on the Great Lakes were derived from designs tested on the relatively sheltered waters of the Hudson River and Long Island Sound. Instead, Hamilton consciously, and virtually for the first time, asked for a European design, specifically that of a British channel steamer. Operating year round out of British ports in the same latitudes, in the narrow seas between Britain and the continent, it must have seemed that the channel steamers offered a significant advance on the Long Island Sound design.

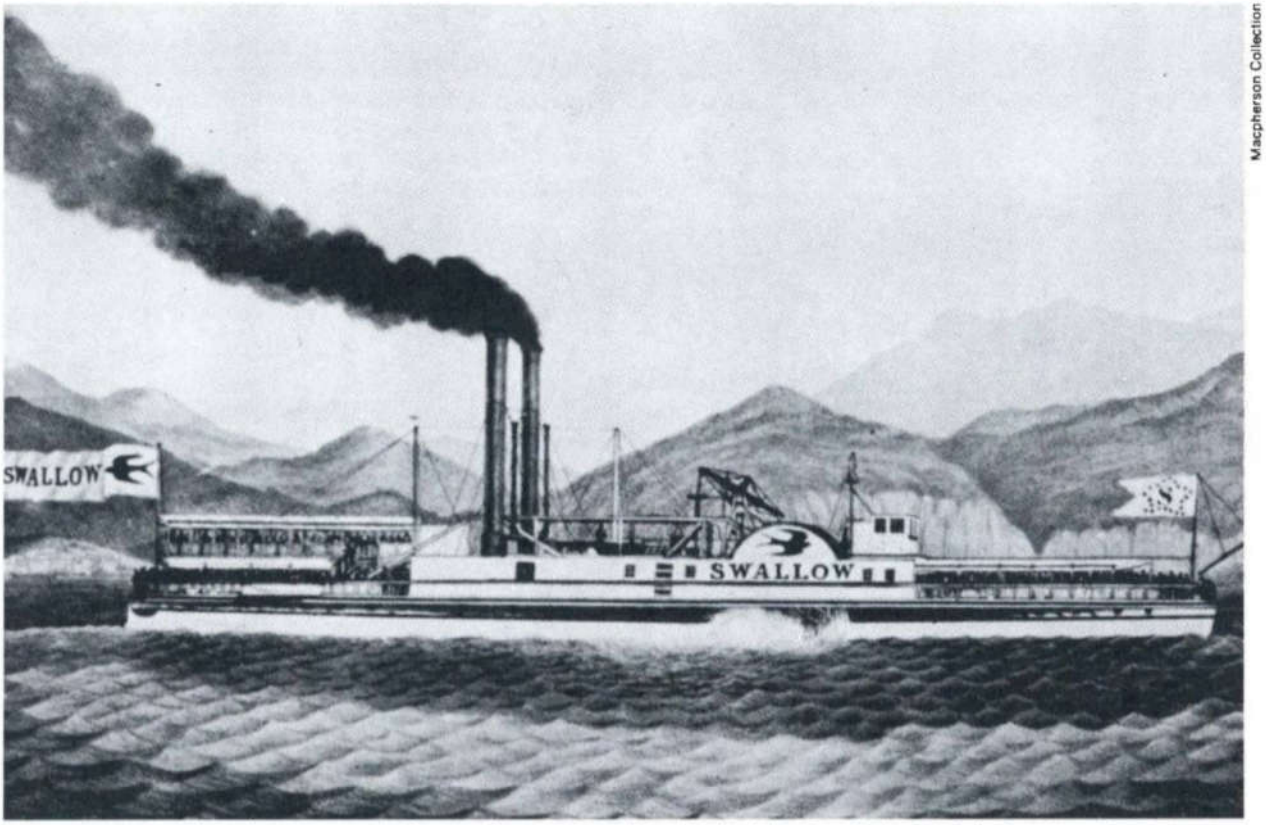
To build the *Traveller*, Hamilton engaged the newest shipyard on the lakes, the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company, and their young chief shipwright, Robert Gilkison. The grandson of Commodore Alexander Grant of the Provincial Marine (and briefly Administrator of the province of Upper Canada), Gilkison was both well connected and practically a stranger to the province. His father had returned to Scotland in 1815 when Robert was only five. After serving a ten-year apprenticeship to a Port Glasgow shipwright, John Wood, he returned to Niagara. There the *Traveller* would be his first major contract. Considering that shipbuilding was almost at a standstill in the spring of 1835, the Dock Company and Gilkison may well have been desperate to show what they could accomplish.

According to Gilkison's notes he laid the keel of the *Traveller* on 24 April 1835 and launched her on 15 August. The newspapers duly described the craft as "schooner rigged with her machinery below, after the fashion of the British Channel Steamers." She was 145′ stem to stern, 23′6″ at the beam with an 11′ hold.

Although the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company was also eager to build marine engines, Hamilton had ordered these from the most experienced company in the Canadas, Ward's Eagle Foundry of Montreal. They supplied two 40 horse power, walking beam engines with cylinders seven feet in length. The shafts and cranks were made of wrought iron manufactured in Glasgow. Not for the *Traveller* would there be the regular problems associated with the fracturing of cast iron cranks and shafts. These could cripple a vessel out in the mid-winter storms of the Great Lakes; and if it survived virtually the only repair facilities were hundreds of snow-covered miles away at the foundry in Montreal.

The whole project cost some £8,000. There are no registers for this era to tell if he mortgaged his other vessels, the *Great Britain* or the *Queenston*, against the bills. With no other evidence available we can only assume that the *Traveller* was entirely paid for by John Hamilton and profits from three seasons of unprecedented immigration into the region.

Almost three more months were spent fitting her out before a trial trip was run down the lake in November. Her captain was Joseph Whitney, whose regular command, the *Great Britain*, had been laid up at the end of October. The press made obligatory approving noises of the sort directed at all potential advertisers — but especially one who promised to fill in some of the dead space when all the other shipping ads were withdrawn. They anticipated that the *Traveller* would run to Christmas and then start again in March, with "frequent trips in dead of winter". The standard claims were made, not the least of which was that the *Traveller* had the "foremost speed on western waters". This was not so hollow as most of such statements, if Gilk-




Macpherson Collection

*A steamer of the Hudson River type used in Canadian waters until Hamilton built the "Traveller" to English Channel specifications. The "Swallow" plied the Hudson between New York and Albany after her launching in 1836. The "Traveller" was of sturdier construction to withstand rough conditions.*

ison was to be believed. He recorded in 1838 that she was still the "fastest boat on Lake Ontario" being capable of 13 miles an hour and averaging "11 to 12 notts".

True to her advanced billing, the *Traveller* was one of the last steamboats out in the fall of 1835. By early December Richardson's *Transit* was her only competition on the run from Niagara to Toronto. At York she was to stop at the King's wharf — "near the Garrison", but outside the regular harbour.

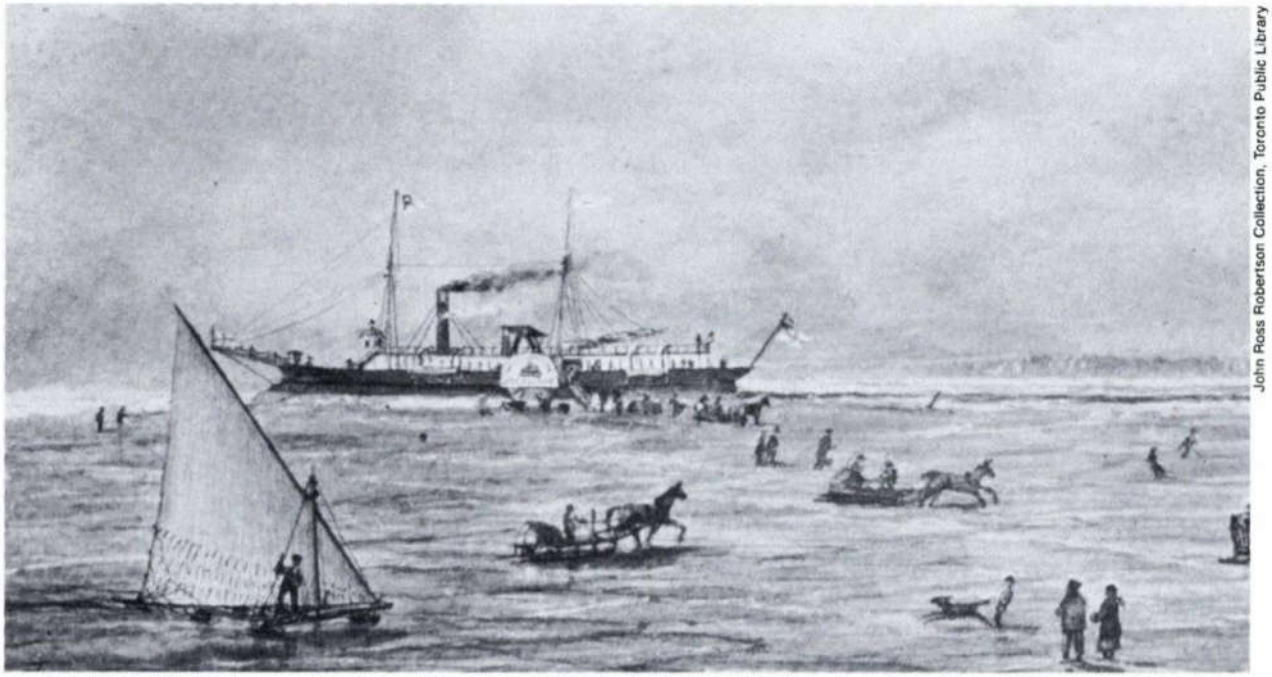
Early the following March it was noted that she was ready to begin running again "thereby affording that facility to travellers which from a tedious winter was much looked for."

Unfortunately, the voyage proved equally long.

> On leaving Niagara on Monday she encountered such a solid body of drift ice and snow, as rendered it impossible to proceed. On Wednesday she fortunately got an opening in this mass; but immediately after, and when all obstruction was thought to be overcome, it was found that what appeared the calm surface of the water was a solid body of ice, about two inches thick, through which, for about fifteen miles, the boat had to force her way. When about the middle of the lake, it was considered necessary to examine the vessel, to ascertain whether she was sustaining any damage. During this stop, our informant, with others of the passengers, and the captain, left the boat and went upon the ice. We understand that this is an unprecedented circumstance, as far as has previously been ascertained as to the state of our lake in winter. . .

So late was the 1836 season that when the *Traveller* ran down to Kingston in late April she still had to land her passengers on the ice.

While the *Traveller* was designed for winter navigation, in order to be profitable, of course, she had to operate year round. The route which Hamilton chose was that from which Richardson's *Transit* had just been moved, although it would be July 1836 before the *Traveller* settled in. She ran from Hamilton to Toronto, on to Port Hope, Cobourg and Presqu'ile (Brighton, Ont.) before crossing to Rochester. Her new captain was a thirty-year-old sailor from the island of Hoy, in the Orkneys. At the age of seventeen, James Sutherland had gone to sea, and was reputed to have sailed to Holland, Portugal, the Brazils, and the Baltic and travelled in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company with Sir John Franklin. He is also said to have sailed on the *Royal William* (albeit before she crossed



John Ross Robertson Collection, Toronto Public Library

*Detail from William Armstrong's painting of the steamer "Chief Justice Robinson" landing passengers on the ice of Toronto Bay, 1852-53.*

the Atlantic) and by December 1833 was the mate on the *Great Britain*. Another season, as captain of the *Queenston*, had proven Sutherland's worth to his employer.

An incident occurred during the course of the season which would have later implications for Sutherland and the *Traveller*. Near the end of summer, while crossing the lake Sutherland discovered that some military deserters had stowed away on board. Knowing that continuing to Rochester would mean their freedom, Sutherland ordered the *Traveller* put about for Toronto. Almost immediately the passengers threatened mutiny:

> It appears he was not easily intimidated — for he immediately armed himself with a blunderbuss and a pair of pistols, took his stand at the wheel, and gave his crew orders to throw the first man overboard who attempted resistance to his commands.

In the troubles that followed there was little question in many minds as to where Sutherland would take his stand.

It was with no little effort that Captain James Sutherland got the *Traveller* out of Rochester's port at the end of the 1836 season:

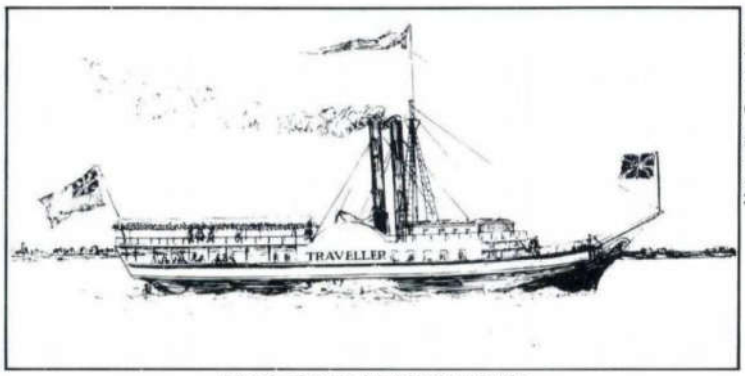
> . . . it was with the greatest exertion that he cleared the Genessee River on Monday, it being covered with a coat of ice fully half an inch thick. Captain Sutherland had to make use of a schooner and lighter, in order to break up the ice.

Like the previous season, the *Traveller* was late getting on her regular route in the spring of 1837. This time the delay centred on renovations to her accommodations. Instead of a low, naval appearance, she sported a new promenade deck, while the accommodations in the ladies' cabin had been expanded to 16 berths. The bill, according to the press, approached £1,000.

One document survives, in one of the collections of papers of her captain, which suggests that a major stake in *Traveller* was sold about this time. Sutherland bought 20 shares of the 720 offered for $25 a share on 1 July 1837. If Hamilton received face value for all 720 shares, then half of his stake in the *Traveller* was worth about $18,000 or £4,500 Halifax Currency.

Indeed, the last scheduled trip of the 1837 season saw the *Traveller* present "a singular appearance on approaching the wharf [in Toronto], having fully a foot of snow upon her decks; and the passengers report that there was good sleighing at Rochester when they left." In Toronto, the *Traveller* was laid up at Browne's wharf, the engines taken down and the crew paid off for the season.

It quickly proved a very short winter. On the morning of 4 December rumours were flying about Toronto of Mackenzie's rebels advancing on the city. Sutherland was hastily summoned to City Hall where Sir Francis Bond Head, the Lieutenant Governor, had made his headquarters. The captain was ordered "to have the *Traveller* immediately refitted & that every exertion was to be used in getting the Boat ready — and [he] and the Crew were to abide the Orders of the Govt." Sixteen hours of frantic work later, the




Metropolitan Toronto Library

*Sketch of "Traveller" by C.H. Snider.*

*Traveller* sailed for Niagara, returning the same afternoon with volunteers. A few hours later they started off to Kingston, and on their return carried Colonel Allan N. MacNab to Hamilton with his volunteers.

Finally, the *Traveller*'s design was proving its worth.

A winter's gale struck during the return passage to Toronto. In landing at Browne's wharf they lost some fenders and part of the starboard paddlewheel. Pausing only long enough to repair the damage to the wheel, the *Traveller* set out on another two trips to Kingston. In the course of one of those trips Sutherland left a graphic discussion of winter steamboat operation:

> At 1 in the Morning I got to the Wharf in Cobourg, where I took on board some wood. The night was clear and very cold, the steam Joints were not perfectly tight, having fitted out in such a hurry — and the steam that escaped getting confined by the cold air, created such a thick fogg about our decks, that [it] was impossible to see how to work the Engines properly and the consequence was that in starting from the wharf the Engine was started the wrong way and before I could get it stopped the Boat was backed against the wharf and twisted the webb — and sprung the main post of the Rudder, and doing some other damage to the Boats Stern. I hope the Rudder will hold together untill permission is given to lay the boat up when she must get a new [rudder]. Since it happened the boat steers very badly and when I am leaving Kingston (being then very heavy loaded) she is almost unmanageable.

While conscious of the importance of his work to the defence of the province Sutherland continued to be concerned about his expenses. Not only was he carrying extra crew, hired at high wages, but he had officers and guards to feed. Extra planking was being used to sheath the bows, and the base of the new promenade deck had been boarded in to shelter the troops and volunteers he was transporting. Nor did the ordnance and gunpowder on board put anyone in a more comfortable frame of mind.

A man proud of his ship and her appearance, Sutherland was appalled at the destruction wrought by the men he was carrying. "There is no end to the breakage of Glass — and it is impossible to prevent it, as the men are running about with their Muskits [*sic*] — bayonets &c."

Nor was the hull spared. On the night of 7 January, the *Traveller* was working her way through the Thousand Islands piloted by William Shaw, a sailing master very familiar with these treacherous waters. A sudden squall caught her. Even with the engines thrown into reverse she could not be kept from running against one of the islands. The oakum "started" in her seams and she began leaking. Hopes to quickly draw her out on the marine railway at Kingston were dashed when they found two steamers already there. Consequently the *Traveller* returned to Toronto and made another round trip to Kingston without even seeing the extent of the damage — just working the pumps constantly. At some point in late January she was finally laid up for the winter. Sutherland concluded "I have not spared either Boat or Sails — and all safe means to perform my trips as expeditiously as possible — and I feel truly happy to think that it has fallen to my lot to be of a small service to my Beloved Country."

Such services were not so well appreciated in other ports of call. When, early the following year, John Hamilton formed a major new line, the *Traveller* was shifted to the Kingston to Niagara trade. However, she continued to stop in Rochester, where her "scow" was burned in early May.

From 22 October 1838 to 5 February 1839, the *Traveller* was again in government service "Transporting Troops, Ammunition &c. and ready for any other service that might be required." According to one newspaper account, she was armed.

The following season, the *Traveller* was on a route that was to take her regularly into Rochester. Again she was one of the first steamers on the lake. On her

first arrival, Rochester merchants assured a nervous Sutherland that his ship "should be protected and should be in no danger of insult or injury". Returning on the morning of 26 April, the collector of customs asked if he could search the vessel for two prisoners, reported to be aboard in chains. He quickly completed the search and went ashore. Sutherland tells the rest of the story:

> Shortly after the Steward came running to tell me that the Sheriff, some constables and William Lyon Mackenzie were coming. They came on Board. One, a person calling himself the Deputy Sheriff handed me the annexed paper and asked if I had any prisoners on Board. I said he was at liberty to examine the vessel. I turned and observed to Mr. Mackenzie that it was nice amusement for him to be annoying me in this manner. They examined the Ladies Cabin and were proceeding to the examination of the other part of the boat when I was told that a party of armed men were coming down. I remonstrated with the Deputy Sheriff who observed that he was not armed. . . . Mackenzie I was informed had pistols. The Deputy Sheriff said that they merely intended to search the boat and on my observing that I had the Steam up and would move of[f] he recommended me strongly not to do so. I asked what prisoners he had expected we had on board and he answered unfortunate prisoners from the Windsor affair supposed to be on their way to Van Dieman's Land. I asked Mackenzie whether he really thought we were so foolish as to bring our prisoners into the State of New York and he did not think we were.

Sutherland's conclusion was that he could not take the boat back into Rochester "without great danger."

Almost on the spot, the colonial government purchased the *Traveller* from John Hamilton for a reported £9,000 and delivered her to Captain Sandom, the commander of the naval service on the lakes. If this price is correct, Hamilton received every penny spent on the *Traveller* in 1835, and on her improvements in 1837. Shortly afterwards she was placed under the command of Lieutenant James Harper, an officer of the Royal Navy who while on half-pay had commanded merchant steamers on Lake Ontario. His senior officer, Captain Sandom was something of an experimenter, having on the Great Lakes one of the first British naval fleets under steam. In October he ordered coal burned in one boiler and wood in the other. Coal was definitely more successful, resulting in a major naval purchase. Such experiments, while convincing to the navy, did little to convert private steamboat owners who were buying wood into the 1880s.

In a list of the British naval establishment on the Great Lakes, dated 13 Sept. 1841, the *Traveller* had a complement of 40 men and was based at Kingston. Others on that station included the ship *Niagara* (400 men), the steamboat *Experiment* (10 men), and the schooner *Montreal* (15 men).

With the tensions surrounding the American election, "54, 40 or fight", and the Oregon crisis, the Admiralty were very conscious of the fact that they had been the first to abrogate the Rush-Bagot agreement about naval disarmament on the lakes. Characterized at "now too old to be of any service whatever", her auction was advertised for 4 May. The *Traveller* was sold to James Russel for only £2,300.

Thus ended the naval career of the *Traveller*. Although the remainder of the story can be told quickly, in fact it represents the better part of her working career. She was some time finding a niche in the steamboat trades of the 1840s, partly because she became tangled up in the byzantine financial career of John Hamilton's chief rival, Donald Bethune (the youngest brother of Angus Bethune, the old North'wester). Eventually she ended up in the hands of the Calvin Company, a lumber forwarding operation based off Kingston who used her as a tug and for the occasional salvage operation. It is believed her bones, along with those of many others of the Calvin fleet, lie in the ship graveyard in Back Bay off Garden Island.

Winter navigation was something that another of Hamilton's rivals, Captain Hugh Richardson, attempted with another steamer built at the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company.

Perhaps the best known image of steamers in the ice on the Great Lakes is the *Chief Justice Robinson* landing passengers off Toronto in the winter of 1852-53. But by this time, Keefer's *Philosophy of Railroads* was in its fourth edition and the Grand Trunk Railway tracks were on their way to Toronto. Keefer would indeed be proved right. ◆

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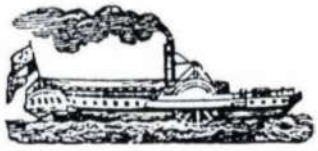
*Walter Lewis of Acton, Ontario, has written extensively on the history of the Great Lakes area. His last article for "The Beaver" was "A Passage to Kingston: the ordeal of travel in pioneer Canada" (August/September 1987).*



FACTIONS AND FEUDS AT RED RIVER

# The Flock Divided

## By Frits Pannekoek

The settlement of Red River changed in the late 1850s and early 1860s. From a relatively quiet backwater, it became the confluence of the northward frontier of the American Republic and the western frontier of the Canadian colonies. In 1858 there were only a few buildings outside Upper Fort Garry at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine; but within ten years there was a drugstore, grist mill, gun shop, harness shop, bookstore, butcher shop, tinsmith, photography studio, carriage shop, two saloons, and a newspaper office. Steamboats, the *Anson Northup* (1859) and the *International* (1862), even attempted, although without great success, to navigate between Moorhead in Dakota and Red River.

Much of this change was due to a major influx of Canadian and American immigrants. Even before the immigration, however, Red River was changing of its own accord. During the six years before 1849, 1,232 new people were added to the colony. This growth was internal, rather than the result of immigration, since only twenty-eight families arrived in Red River between 1849 and 1856. This increase placed a substantial burden on the means of livelihood: the river lot and the hunt. Because the family lands could no longer be divided indefinitely amongst the numerous sons, as had been the tradition, many moved to the plains along the Assiniboine River. Others moved to the United States or into the western interior along the Saskatchewan River at places such as Victoria in what is now Alberta and Prince Albert in present-day Saskatchewan.

There were four major groups in the Red River settlement. The most significant were those of mixed-blood heritage. In 1871 the total population was 11,400. Of these 5,740 were Métis or Catholic French/Cree-speaking mixed bloods. These lived in the parishes south and immediately west of the junctions of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. The 4,080 Protestant and English-speaking mixed bloods lived in the parishes largely north of the junction of the two rivers and after 1854 around Portage la Prairie. It has been argued by some that the Indian blood tied these two groups together as one family. While that would seem common sense, in fact there was little unity between the two groups during the Riel Resistance. Indeed the English-speaking Protestant mixed bloods, who proudly called themselves Halfbreeds, were at odds with Riel. Why? It would seem that the two groups should be of single mind. When the events in the decade preceding the resistance are examined closely, the influence of the Reverend Griffiths Owen Corbett in creating a split between the Halfbreeds and Métis is evident. This bizarre clergyman with his petty politics and religious bigotry managed to effectively divide the mixed-blood community into its Protestant and Catholic halves. Coincidently he reinforced the Halfbreeds' anti-Hudson's Bay Company and pro-Imperial sentiments. When Riel attempted to appeal to the mixed bloods for unity in 1869 he would fail. Corbett had been too effective. The Canadians, with their anti-Catholicism and Imperial bombast, would find supporters in the Halfbreed parishes of Red River.

In the 1850s, at the same time that there were significant demographic and social changes in Red River, both Canada and Great Britain began to show a peculiar interest in the future of Rupert's Land. Red River, of course, chased every rumour of change and there were as many factions as there were alternatives. In the early 1860s Crown Colony status seemed most likely. The Duke of Newcastle, colonial secretary from 1859 to 1864, favoured the creation of a Crown Colony in Rupert's Land as a connecting link between Canada and British Columbia, all of which would eventually comprise a British North American federation. He was supported in his stand by substantial Canadian and British railroad and financial interests. But Red River was only vaguely aware of what was happening in the Colonial Office and at Hudson's Bay House, London. As rumour increased of Imperial support for the Crown Colony status after 1859, it seemed apparent to Red

National Archives of Canada

*The Cathedral of St. Boniface and nunnery on the banks of the Red River opposite Upper Fort Garry, photographed by H.L. Hime in 1858.*

River that change of some sort was inevitable. The settlement hoped that it would be immediate. No firm plan was offered, however, by either the Canadian government, the Imperial government, or the Company. Confusion remained the only political certainty.

The agitation for change in Red River's political status started in 1856-57 in Canada and filtered through to Red River via the *Globe*, the Toronto newspaper read by many of the informed and literate. William Ross, Halfbreed son of Alexander Ross, historian and former sheriff, expressed the prevailing sentiments:

> We ought to have a flood of immigration to infuse new life, new ideas, and destroy all our old associations with the past, *i.e.*, in so far as it hinders our progress for the future — regular transformation will sharpen our intellects, fill our minds with new projects and give life and vigour to all our thoughts, words and actions.

The first petition for change came in June of 1856 from the Protestant clergy. Their demands were moderate, including only restrictions on the importing of alcohol and the introduction of the elective principle in the Council of Assiniboia. They did not wish the removal of the Councillors, only that vacancies be filled by election, and that the settlement be divided for that purpose into districts.

No serious pro-Canadian agitation developed until a few months later. On 26 February, William Dawson of the Dawson-Hind expedition, sent by the Canadian government to assess the fertility of the Assiniboine-Saskatchewan country, gave a lecture, "Canada Past and Present". Interest was high and the governor, the clergy, and some of the Company's active and retired gentlemen attended. There was, however, no open political movement at the parish level. Interest only turned into open agitation when William Kennedy returned to Red River on 7 February 1857 after a number of years of anti-Company agitation in Upper Canada. Like his relative, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, who had been instrumental in the presentation of the 1847 petition to the Imperial Parliament, he was an embittered ex-Hudson's Bay Company employee.

From March to May, a number of meetings organized by Kennedy were held in the Kildonan school house and in the neighbouring Halfbreed parishes. An elder of the Presbyterian Church, Kennedy ingratiated himself with the Kildonan settlers, especially Donald Gunn, one of its leading members, and Rev. John Black, who had strong Canadian sympathies. The Company was severely criticized and annexation to Canada advocated. When Governor F.G. Johnson, who had succeeded Adam Thom as Recorder, attended one of the first March meetings, he was requested to leave. As a result of the meetings the younger settlers displayed their open sympathy with Kennedy and signed his petition for union with Canada. The older settlers, still believing that a certain deference was due the Company, hesitated to make a decision.

In May, Kennedy convinced some in Red River — the exact parishes cannot now be known, but probably they were those between the Upper and Lower Forts — to elect five members, including himself and Isbister, to serve in the provincial legislature of Canada. Kennedy for his part had allowed reports to spread

that he was a representative of Canada. While he publicly denied these reports, he left the vague impression that he had to do so because he was a secret agent. The five members were actually sent off, but Kennedy had second thoughts about the legality of the proceedings. He chose to recall the delegates when he heard that Captain John Palliser was arriving at the head of the British expedition to the North-West and that he might have some concrete instructions for Red River's future.

This spelled the effective end of Kennedy's agitation. By the winter of 1858-59, the semblance of unity that momentarily has existed in Red River disintegrated under the force of new pressures. Rev. G.O. Corbett, arriving in the spring of 1858, was the cause.

Corbett of the Church of England was a contentious and difficult individual, spending much of his life quarreling with his bishops, the Hudson's Bay Company, his fellow clergymen, and the Colonial and Continental Church Society, which sponsored him. While not a charismatic leader, he was something of a gadfly with strong convictions about the rights of Englishmen, and even stronger convictions that these rights were being denied to the Halfbreeds by the tyranny of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Church of Rome. A popular and effective speaker, his views fell on the fertile ground of the political and social unrest in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Corbett aroused the Halfbreeds and directed their energies against both the Company and the Catholics, convincing them that their future lay within a Protestant Crown Colony firmly affixed to the British Empire. Crown Colony status seemed to guarantee an extension of the full rights and privileges of the British constitution and offered a fellowship of English-speaking people, under the loose British nationalism with which the Empire had always annointed its subjects.

When in 1862 Corbett found himself the centre of an unsavoury scandal and defended himself by identifying it as a Company plot to discredit him and his movement for Crown Colony status, feelings grew so intense that Red River split into two factions. The pro-Company group, who believed Corbett guilty, included strangely enough the Métis, who disliked his anti-Catholicism. The anti-Company group, who were the most fervent Crown Colony advocates, believed him innocent, and were composed principally of the Protestant English-speaking Halfbreeds. In the end the two groups verged on open war.

Rev. G.O. Corbett despised the Catholics, considered them barbarians and used the newspaper to propagandize his sentiments. In a community torn by dissent and rife with status tensions, Corbett's anti-Catholicism was absorbed as eagerly as his anti-Company rhetoric. He taught the Halfbreeds that because

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

*James Ross: Opting for Canada.*

they were Protestant they were superior to the Catholic Métis of Red River.

Corbett felt that the British liberties of Red River, a Protestant colony of a Protestant queen, were succumbing to the tyranny of the Church of Rome. Corbett, seeing, as he imagined, too many examples of the growing power of the Papal "anti-Christ", felt it his duty to warn of the dangerous consequences. His greatest concern was William Mactavish, the Governor of Assiniboia. Mactavish had married a Catholic daughter of Andrew McDermot in Saint-Boniface Cathedral, and in the following years baptized his children into the Catholic faith. All of Protestant Red River had considered the marriage an insult to Bishop Anderson of the Church of England, who had apparently expected to conduct the ceremony. Corbett was convinced that, with the governor a virtual Catholic, and with seven Catholics against seven Protestants on the Council of Assiniboia, "the balance of power [was] with the Pope of Rome."

When an official report of the legislative proceedings of the Council of Assiniboia referred to the Catholic Bishop as "Lord Bishop", Corbett had what he considered proof. Legally only Bishop Anderson, who wanted no part in the controversy and who unsuccessfully cautioned Corbett to moderate his stand, was entitled to the title. Only Anderson had been appointed by "Her Most Gracious Sovereign the Queen". Corbett considered use of the title for Bishop Taché both "insidious" and "unconstitutional". When the Council

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*Bishop David Anderson: A futile call for moderation.*

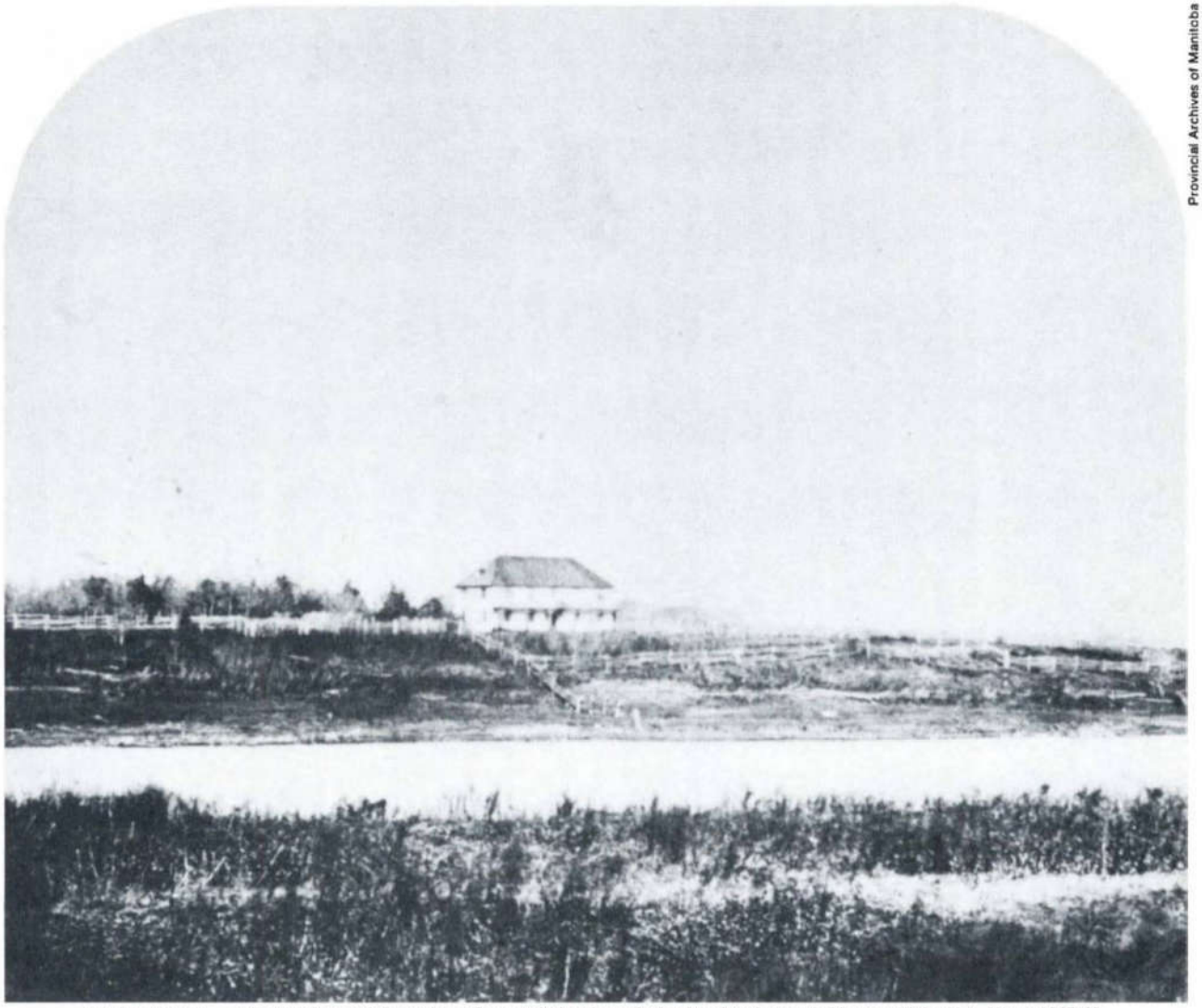
*Donald Gunn: No Crown Colony.*

of Assiniboia continued its folly by passing a law forbidding all government activity on Catholic holidays, there was no longer any doubt in Corbett's mind — Red River had fallen to the Pope.

These religious tensions that had split the society asunder tended to centre on the settlement along the Assiniboine River, but their impact was felt throughout the whole of Red River. The *Nor'Wester* newspaper was particularly effective in ensuring that the controversies of the 1860s would continue to exacerbate social, religious and racial divisions. Every imagined slight was well publicized and exaggerated. In 1860, for example, a heated battle waged between Henry Cook, a Halfbreed Anglican schoolmaster and François Bruneau, one of the principal Métis, over the quality of Protestant and Catholic education. So virulent did Protestant sentiment become that James Ross, rather moderate in his anti-Catholicism and at times a restraining influence on Corbett, fearing a loss of Protestant business, refused on first request to publish an obituary and eulogy for Sister Valade, one of the first and most venerated sisters at Saint-Boniface. When in August 1861 Ross dared to publish an article suggesting that the Halfbreeds were superior to the Métis, the elder Riel visited Ross and *"il lui a chanté une chanson, la chanson du juge Thom"*. In other words Riel threatened Ross's life, just as he had done years earlier to Adam Thom, the first Recorder of Rupert's Land, who had voiced similar bigotries.

An understanding of these religious divisions is critical to the understanding of the crises which faced Red River as Corbett commenced his agitation for Crown Colony status in 1858. In December of 1858 Corbett and his cohort, Reverend John Chapman of St. Andrew's parish, the Company's chaplain, circulated their first petition advocating Crown Colony status. Corbett believed that annexation to Canada would place Red River "altogether in the hands of a subordinate power". He felt that if Red River were a Crown Colony, it would become the civil and commercial hub of the West, with its own elected Assembly — a feature that was central to all of Corbett's arguments. He believed that "whatever advantages Canada enjoys, apart from her natural position, she derives these from her connection with England as Crown Colony." He damned the Company for its alleged inability to maintain law and order and its obstruction of material progress. Both would be remedied, he believed, when Rupert's Land assumed its rightful place in the Empire as a Crown Colony.

Donald Gunn, William Kennedy, and James Ross, the leaders of the Canadian party, vigorously opposed



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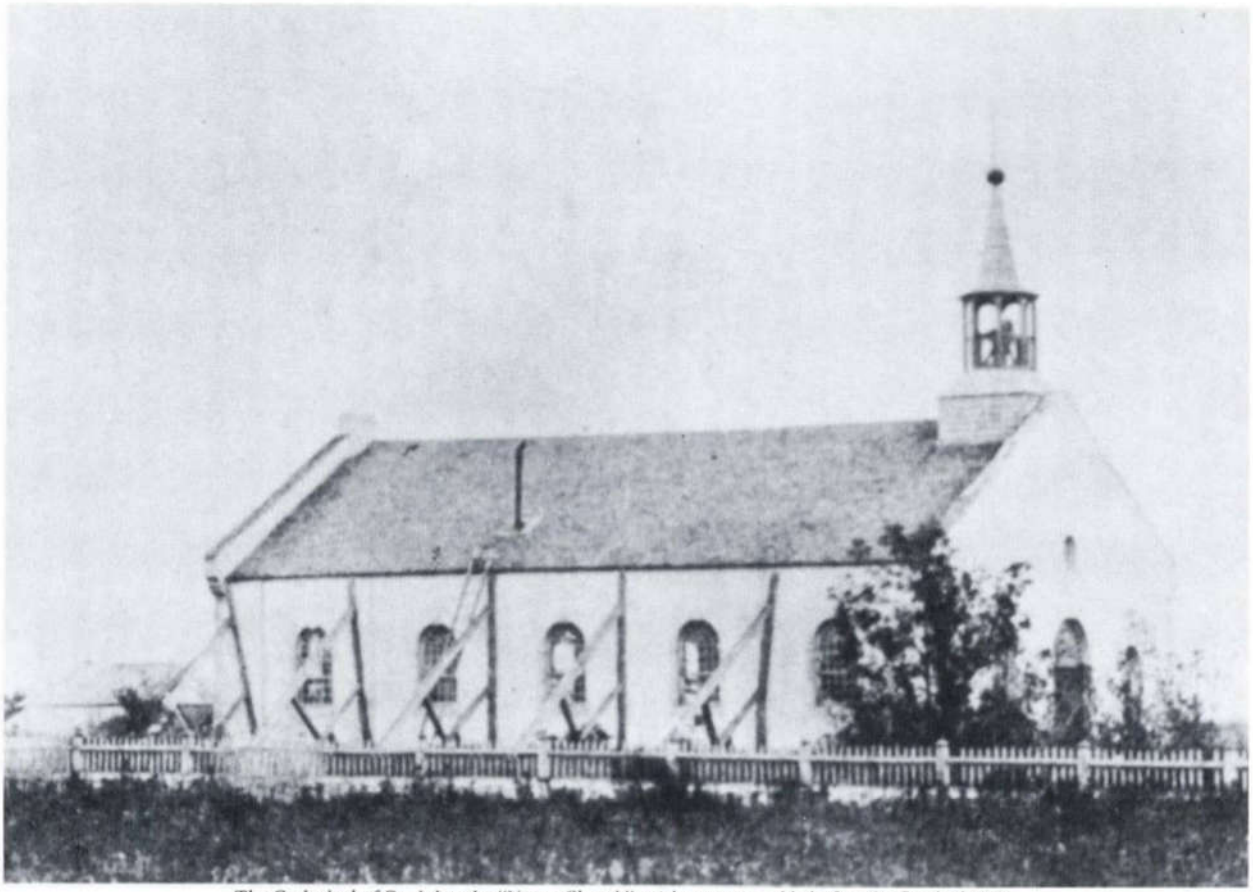
*"Bishop's Court — The Residence of the Bishop of Rupert's Land, on the banks of Red River". Photograph by H.L. Hime, 1857-58.*

Corbett and circulated a counter-petition advocating annexation to Canada. At this point, William Kennedy and James Ross, both Halfbreeds with strong British Canadian connections, still felt Canada offered the best future — and Crown Colony status continued domination by the Company. Both petitions were sent to the House of Lords where they were ignored.

Corbett's agitation for political change assumed an even wider and more popular basis in the early 1860s. On 30 October 1862 the Council of Assiniboia petitioned the British government for troops in the face of a rumoured Sioux attack, a feared American invasion, and the growing local disaffection. The Council's petition made the rounds of Kildonan, Headingley, and St. Paul's parishes, gathering some 1,183 signatures. As the petition was circulating, Rev. G.O. Corbett, Rev. John Chapman, the former Company chaplain, and James Ross, who joined Corbett's party when it became apparent that Canada was no longer interested in annexation, circulated a counter-petition condemning the Council of Assiniboia and the Company, and requesting Crown Colony status. Ross also refused to publish the Council's petition in his newspaper, the *Nor'Wester.* The counter-petitioners claimed that troops were not so much needed as a more efficient government. There was considerable confusion as to who supported which petition since many attempted to delete their signatures from the Council's petition in order to support the counter-petition. The Company, as a disciplinary action, deprived Ross of his public offices of sheriff, governor of the gaol, and postmaster. Both petitions were ultimately sent to the Colonial office where they too were ignored.



*The Cathedral of St. John, the "Upper Church", with supports added after the flood of 1852.*

The Council's petition was seen by the aroused Halfbreeds as a plot to crush their efforts to throw off the yoke of the Hudson's Bay Company. Consequently, when the lurid details of Corbett's presumed attempts to induce the miscarriage of his illegitimate child by Maria Thomas struck like a thunderbolt from nowhere, his protested innocence and his accusations of a Company conspiracy appeared completely credible to the Halfbreeds. After all, earlier that winter Maria had been persuaded in front of a magistrate to deny the rumours of an affair. The denial had been acceptable but when Corbett was jailed on the abortion charges and refused bail, in spite of precedent for granting such a request, the Halfbreeds were certain that the Company had resurrected a charge which had no substance and which had already been dismissed. Many were convinced that Maria Thomas's father, having pressed the charges, and Thomas Sinclair, the magistrate, were in the Company's pay. In effect, the question became not one of Corbett's guilt or innocence, but rather one of support for, or opposition to, the Company's supposed tyranny.

Corbett was charged with violation of 24 and 25 Victoria ch. 100 passed in 1861. It states that:

> Whosoever, with intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman, whether she be, or not be with child, shall unlawfully administer to her or cause to be taken by her, any poison or noxious thing, or shall unlawfully use in instrument or other means whatsoever with the like intent, shall be guilty of felony, and, being convicted thereof, shall be liable at the discretion of the Court to be kept in penal servitude for life, or for any term not less than three years, or to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour, and with or without solitary confinement.

In his charge to the jury on the ninth day of the Corbett trial which was published on 12 May 1863 in the *Nor'Wester* Recorder Black felt that he ought to elaborate on the law:

> I may state that the law regarding this crime has within the last 35 years, undergone various changes. At one time the law made a distinction between acts in which the attempt was made on a woman quick with child and one not quick with child. Previous to

the passing of the statute under which the prisoner is indicted that which regulates this offence made it material whether or not the woman was pregnant. By a subsequent statute 7 Wm. IV, and Vic. ch. 85, that distinction was done away with, and there were some slight differences and alterations, which were embodied in the statute under which the prisoner is indicted.

The outcome of the case was not the result of this new "mass" concern with abortion that swept America and Great Britain in the 1850s through to the 1880s. Prior to the 1850s and 1860s life was construed to begin with "quickening" or "stirring in the womb," and abortion before "quickening" was not a felony. Corbett attempted to abort Maria Thomas's and his alleged child after the fourth month. The scurrilous *Nor'Wester* indicated that Corbett, whom they supported, had been unjustly accused of "murder". Nevertheless the abortion was not successful, and despite Maria Thomas's explicit testimony, Corbett was jailed for six months, an extremely light sentence given the damning evidence.

The trial commenced on Thursday, 19 February 1863, continued for nine days, and heard sixty-one witnesses. Rev. John Chapman described the shocking trial to the secretaries of the Church Missionary Society:

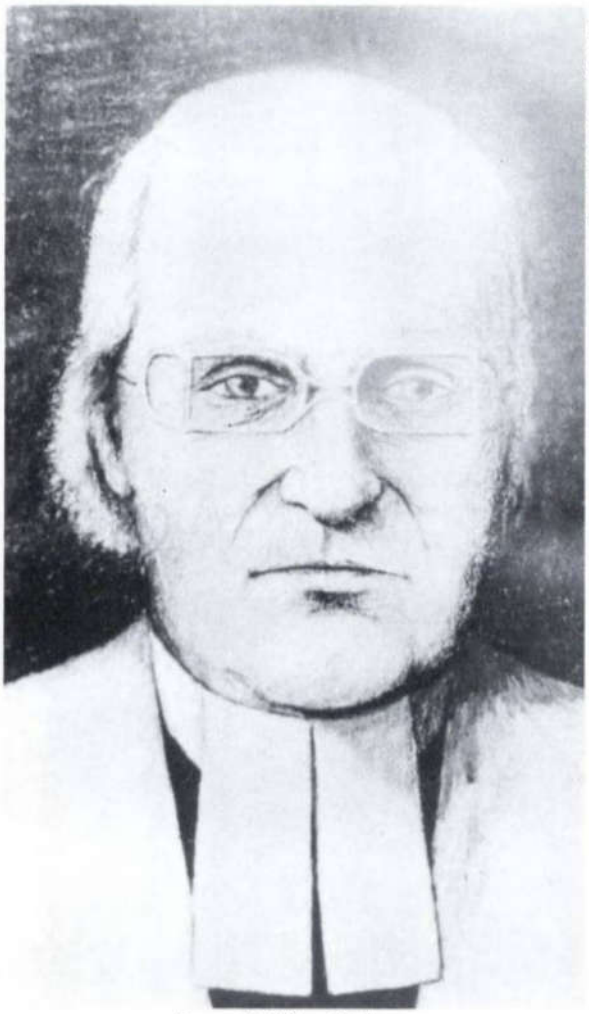
> What a spectacle . . . Mr. Corbett in one box & Maria Thomas a young girl of 16 years in the witness box, with her babe in her arms which she declares is Mr. Corbett's and whose embryo life he is charged with attempting to destroy by means of medicine, instruments &c.

The Bishop appointed Archdeacon James Hunter to conduct an independent church investigation and before the court made its own decision, he pronounced Corbett guilty as charged. The court then followed suit. Corbett refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the Court of Assiniboia, or to accept its decision, and continued his accusations of a conspiracy on the part of the Company and the Church of England. For the rest of his life, he insisted upon his innocence and he was supported in his view by many in Red River. Some indeed were prepared to resort to arms.

The first incident occurred at nine o'clock on the morning of Saturday, 6 December 1862. In response to the denial of bail for Corbett, one hundred and fifty to two hundred persons, principally from Headingley but with groups from St. James, St. John's, St. Paul's and St. Andrew's, arrived at Fort Garry. Governor Alexander Grant Dallas, Simpson's unpopular successor from the Pacific coast, favoured a hard line, but when riot was threatened he allowed Corbett to address the crowd. Corbett, for his part, encouraged all to continue their fight for justice. Finally James Ross, and ten to twelve of the more respected members of the crowd, persuaded Dallas that he would have to allow bail or suffer the consequences.

The second instance of mob rule occurred during the third month of Corbett's six-month sentence. On 14 April the Halfbreeds submitted a petition signed by 552 of their number, requesting a pardon for Corbett. Six days later, after Dallas had refused to consider their pleas, Corbett was freed by force. The Governor

*St. James Assiniboia, the scene of disputes between Reverend W.H. Taylor and schoolmaster James Stewart.*



Provincial Archives of Manitoba

*Reverend William Cockran.*

responded by arresting James Stewart, the mixed-blood schoolmaster of St. James parish school and a ringleader in the agitation.

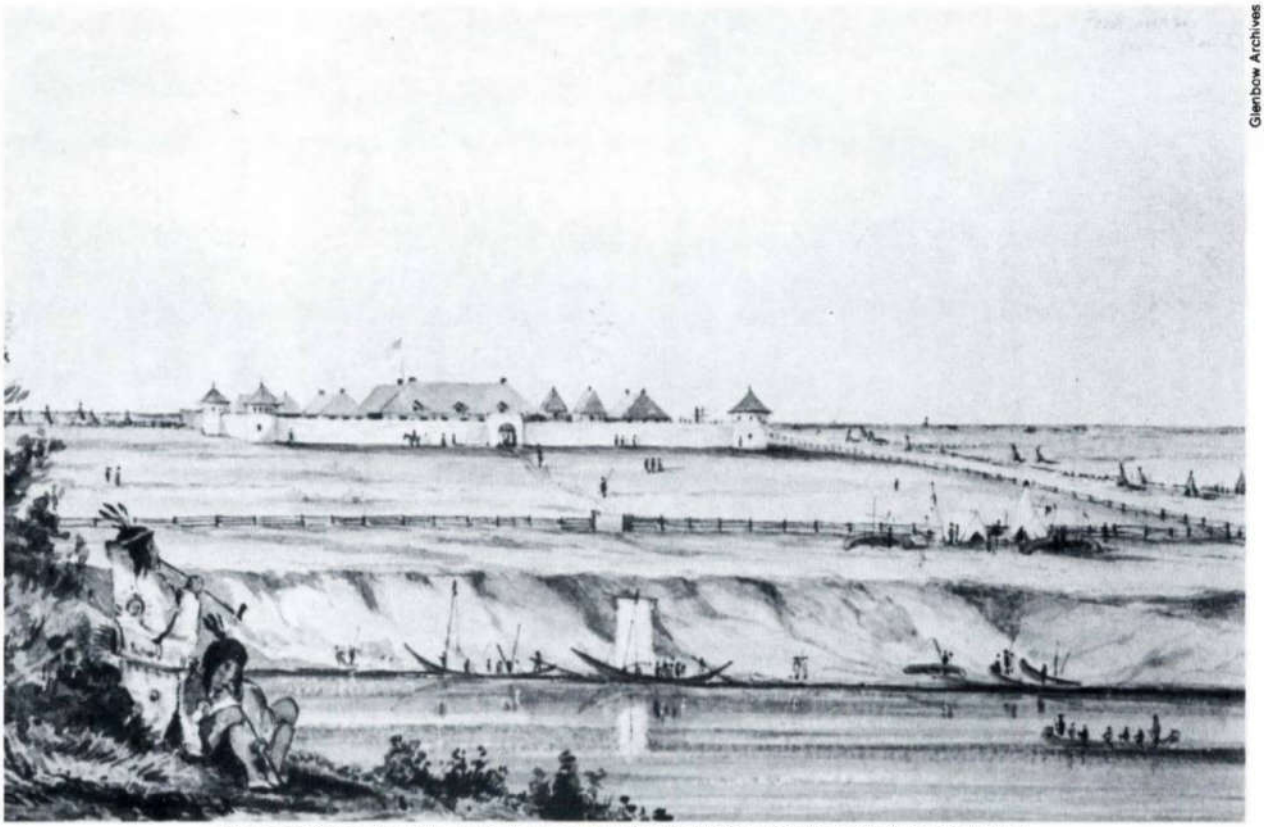
Governor Dallas, suspecting a plot to free Stewart, called upon twenty-five Métis and twenty-five Halfbreeds to defend the prison. Only five of the Halfbreeds would serve; the Métis, who had no use for "Corps Bête" as they called the anti-Catholic Corbett, appeared in full force. At ten o'clock on the morning of 22 April twenty-seven protestors headed by William Hallett and James Ross, demanded an interview with Dallas. When Dallas refused to meet the insurgents, Ross sent a petition demanding the liberation of Stewart, the cessation of all discussion over the Corbett affair, and the removal of Sheriff McKenney, a supporter of the Company, who had replaced Ross. Dallas again refused, and Ross rode into the prison compound and liberated Stewart. It is evident that had Dallas not forbidden a violent confrontation, the Métis would have used force to stop Ross which in turn would have triggered *une guerre civile* between Protestant and Catholic Red River. Fortunately, most of the twenty-five Métis were from Saint-Boniface and under the control of the moderate François Bruneau. Had *les hivernants*, the Métis boatmen and tripmen living at Cheval Blanc and Saint-Norbert, been involved, as had been initially intended, blood would most certainly have been shed. The "winterers" were hardly as charitable as their brethren at Saint-Boniface and after a long season of winter confinement would have been ready to flex their muscles in a Red River spring in order to teach the insolent Protestants a lesson. Consequently nothing was done to recapture Stewart.

The situation had deteriorated to such an extent that late in May, one month after the Corbett escape, John Bourke, who had been involved in all three acts of defiance, and James Stewart went so far as to attempt the organization of a "Provisional Government". It is probable that Corbett himself was involved. Stewart suggested that Headingley, St. James, and Portage la Prairie should secede from Red River and form an independent colony subordinate only to the Crown. Ultimately the proposal failed to gain sufficient support, and the conspirators, who lacked apparent organizational ability, gave up the plan.

Within the colony generally the jail breaks were followed by an increased questioning of Red River's traditional leaders. Even after suspension by both the Bishop and the Colonial and Continental Church Society, Corbett returned to Headingley where he assumed his clerical duties. The Bishop sent replacements, including William Henry Taylor from the neighbouring parish, but the congregation locked the church doors and refused admittance to any clergyman save Corbett. In a ludicrous climax to the issue, John Chapman, formerly Corbett's ally, finally forced the door and preached to an empty church. The Bishop then ordered Corbett to leave Rupert's Land by 1 September 1863, but even in this he was defied and Corbett remained in the settlement until the following June.

In the neighbouring parish of St. James the persecution of the pro-Corbett group was equally vigorous if somewhat less successful. While James Stewart was allowed to teach for two months following his escape, Rev. William Henry Taylor, on poor terms with Stewart because of an earlier dispute over the location of the school, hired a replacement with the Bishop's approval. Stewart then opened a private school where the great majority sent their children, forcing Taylor to close his. Taylor never regained his popularity.

The parishes along the Red River were also affected by the upheaval. Not only did many refuse to attend church services, but Archdeacon James Hunter was



Glenbow Archives

*Upper Fort Garry from the south, from a watercolour by William Napier, mid-nineteenth century.*

attacked for his investigations into the Corbett case. John Tait, a carpenter and miller from St. Andrew's parish, circulated a number of vicious rumours against Hunter to prove that any untruth could find support in Red River. Consequently he reasoned, Corbett was probably just as easily innocent as guilty. Bishop Anderson urged Hunter to sue but a court case was avoided when Tait signed an apology that was read from St. Andrew's pulpit, and paid Hunter £100. Hunter announced that he would distribute the sum amongst Tait's daughters and when he failed to do so, Tait sued but lost.

As a result of the gossip and ill-feeling generated by the Corbett and related affairs, both Bishop Anderson and Archdeaon Hunter, his presumed successor, resigned their positions. Hunter commented that "the storm is pitiless, *a systematic blackening of the characters of all.* No one can live in this land with this adversary, and my prophecy is that in two years there will not be four clergymen on the two rivers."

His prediction possessed a degree of truth and by 1867 all of the most prominent clergymen had left Red River: Anderson in 1864, Hunter in 1865, and Chapman and Taylor in 1867. Their numbers were further reduced by William Cockran's death in 1864.

By 1865, then, the Halfbreeds had achieved a degree of confidence about their own identity, largely through Corbett's influence. They were to liberate Red River from the two tyrannies of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Roman Church. With Red River a Crown Colony, they would then follow Corbett, a thoroughly Protestant Englishman. They would have the balance of power. In the first decades of the history of the settlement, identity had been based on race, and rank in the Company. With Corbett's agitation acting as a catalyst, racial ties were weakened. They did not see themselves as English-speaking Protestant versions of the Métis. They did not identify with the Métis Nation. They were not petty settlers in a squalid little Company settlement in the isolated and frigid heart of British North Ameria. They were not poverty-stricken coloured parishioners of the white, missionary dominated Church of England. They were Protestant subjects of Her Most Britannic Majesty's Empire, an Empire upon which the sun never set.

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*This article is derived from Frits Pannekoek's book "A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance 1869-70" published autumn 1990 by Watson & Dwyer, Winnipeg.*

# THE WANDERER

## John Keast Lord in Colonial British Columbia, 1858-62

By John Hayman

By all accounts, John Keast Lord was a vivid personality. An assistant naturalist and veterinarian on the Northwest Boundary Commission (1858-62) he was also an avid hunter, trapper, and angler — "as thorough a sportsman as ever was," according to one of his colleagues on the commission. A clergyman who met him shortly after his arrival in Victoria also testified as to his energy; he was, the Reverend Crickmer declared, "the soul of the party."

Lord himself described his life in vivid terms. For much of his writing, he used the pen-name "The Wanderer" — and he certainly deserved the title. In *The Naturalist in Vancouver Island and British Columbia* (1866), he displayed his familiarity with widely-separated regions when remarking on the prevalence of mosquitoes throughout the world:

> A wanderer from my boyhood, I have met with these pests in various parts of our globe — in the country of Czernomorzi, among the Black Sea Cossacks, on the plains of Troy, up on Mount Olympus, amid the gorgeous growths of a tropical forest, where beauty and malaria, twin brothers, walk hand-in-hand — away in the deep dismal solitudes of the swamps on the banks of the Mississippi, on the wide grassy tracts of the Western prairies, and on the snow-clad summits of the Rocky Mountains.

Back in England, following his sojourn on the Northwest coast, he turned his far-flung experience to good account by dressing up as a trapper and hunter and presenting dramatic lectures at the Egyptian Hall in London.

Despite this flair for self-promotion, there are some sections of Lord's life which are obscure. The eminent naturalist, Francis Buckland, was to remark in an obituary that Lord "rarely spoke about his personal life", even though he had enjoyed with Lord "a most intimate friendship." Drawing on "private information," Lord's biographer in *The Dictionary of National Biography* remarked that he was "said to be the son of Edward Lord, [and] was born in Cornwall in 1818." In addition, the biography continues: "He was brought to Tavistock, Devonshire . . . and educated by an uncle named Luscombe, a man of some local importance." One would like to know more about these circumstances, but enquiries in the area have not provided further information.

*The Dictionary of National Biography* also notes rather darkly that soon after Lord received his veterinary diploma in 1844 and established a practice in Tavistock, "his convivial tastes led him astray, and he suddenly disappeared." Fortunately, he did not disappear without trace. The *DNB* further reports that he was "a trapper in Minnesota and the Hudson's Bay fur countries" and that he served as a veterinarian during the Crimean War. *The Queen: A Lady's Newspaper*, a journal to which Lord contributed, presented a rather more colourful account of all this in a "Memoir" in 1863:

> We first see him clinging to the torn and shattered rigging of the storm-tossed ship driving before the sleet and rain on a dead lee shore, that shore the Island of Anticosti. A desperate swim for life, and the low dreary, and inhospitable shore is reached with the loss of all save life. A few days' sojourn in the refuge house, erected here for shipwrecked mariners, and we find him on board a Greenland whaler, staggering along under double-reefed topsails away on a whaling voyage.
>
> Where we next meet our wanderer is on the deck of a lake steamer, with pack and rifle, on his way to the hunting grounds of the Far West. Hairbreadth escapes from Indian bullets, charging bear, and swamped canoe, troop by like scenes in a dream. . .
>
> We are very far away on the great plains of Minnesota. Buffaloes have been chased; hump, ribs, and marrow-bones have been roasting at the fires; here come some other fellows with as much meat as their horses can carry. One of them is our wandering friend, with the largest beard and biggest rifle of the whole.

Lord's experiences on the Northwest Boundary Commission are more closely documented. Together with other officers who were to be concerned with marking the land boundary from Point Roberts to the summit of the Rockies along the 49th parallel, he arrived at Esquimalt on 12 July 1858. (The group concerned with the boundary's extension through the Gulf Islands — an undertaking that was to run on the rocks of San Juan Island — had been active since 1857.)

As assistant naturalist, Lord was subordinate to Dr. David Lyall, but he seems not to have worked with Lyall at all closely. In fact, Lyall does not mention Lord in his report on the botany of the area which he published in *Proceedings of the Linnaean Society*. Lord's own activity as a naturalist is evidenced most clearly by his two-volume publication, *The Naturalist in Vancouver Island and British Columbia* (1866). In this work, there are sections in which he describes beast, bird and fish in the terms of his time. He deposited much of his collection at the British Museum, and he was keen to remark on its being both analysed and exhibited there.

Several apparently new species were also named after Lord at this time: *Lepidnotus Lordii*, an annelid credited to him by Professor Baird; *Spongilla Lordii*, named after him by Professor Bowerbank; and *Lagomys min-*

*Opposite page: John Keast Lord, from the frontispiece of "At Home in the Wilderness", 1867. (British Columbia Archives).*

RE Corps Library, Institution of Royal Engineers

*Officers' quarters, Pilgrim's Rest Barracks, Esquimalt. Of these quarters, Lieutenant Wilson wrote: "We are all roughing it here, there was nothing in the house but bare walls or rather wood with sun dry crevices through which daylight is visible."*

*imus* (Lord, sp. nov.), a subspecies of the Rocky Mountain Pika. These attributions to Lord have not survived, though I. McTaggart Cowan and Charles T. Guiguet remark in *The Mammals of British Columbia* that the pika was "first described" by Lord.

Lord's excitement about finding a viviparous fish was also somewhat misplaced. At first, he supposed that the tiny fish he found within a larger fish had simply been devoured. But closer examination indicated otherwise. On the cover of both volumes of *The Naturalist in British Columbia* he imprinted an illustration of the phenomenon, and he also reproduced the illustration within the book — apparently unaware that Dr. Agassiz had classified the phenomenon a decade or so earlier.

Such flaws in Lord's research — shared by academics of his time — do not affect one's admiration for Lord's enthusiasm. In writing of his quest for beetles and other insects, he remarks: "boxes, bottles, bags, even my hat, indeed every available locality about my person, was appropriated to the stowage and transport of the proceeds of my hunt." He was sometimes uneasy about killing the creatures he wished to study, and he justified his actions by an appeal to "the cause of science".

Lord was more professionally accomplished as a veterinarian. In particular, he was much concerned with the well-being of the commission's pack-animals. During the winter of 1859-60 on the Sumas prairie, he avoided the disastrous effects which could result from letting the animals subsist on equisetum or horse tail rush. From the experience of others, he recognized the terrible sequence provoked by this diet: "the most violent purging came on, accompanied with cramp, rigours, utter prostration, and speedy death." Lord prudently augmented the animals' diet with hay and barley. He records: "I had a large square enclosed with open sheds in which the animals were fed and kept, being driven out only to ice-holes cut in the stream twice every day to drink." Lord was also careful to ensure that the pack-animals had adequate food on the trail. The problem was especially acute amid the bush and forest on the western side of the Cascade Mountains. As Dr. Lyall remarked "A great proportion of the loads carried by horses and mules travelling this way necessarily consist of grain for themselves."

More exactly, Lord commented that the pack-animals might consume as much as 1,000 lbs. of grain a day and that this grain had to be imported at great cost from Chile. Captain John Summerfield Hawkins, the Head of the British land party, was dismayed by the expense of such procedures. When preparing the Secretary of State for the transportation expenses that would be incurred in 1860, he drew on earlier experience and wrote: "I regret to say that the cost of this will be *enormous*, but it is quite unavoidable. The charges for transport in this year's account will probably not fall much, if at all, short of £10."

Lord was eminently adaptable. He was not only a naturalist and veterinarian, but also much concerned with the logistics of transporting the commission's supplies. In the journal, *Land and Water*, he even described himself as "General Manager of the Transport." Additional titles would also have been possible, since Lord served at various times as Outfitter, Purchasing Agent, and Supply Officer.

Perhaps his most remarkable achievement was his equipping the commission with mules for the 1860 season. By this time, the commission had located most of the boundary between the coast and the summit of the Cascade Mountains. To avoid contending further with a route through the mountains, plans now called for a supply base and winter camp at Fort Colville and an approach to the boundary from the south. In preparation for this move, Lord's assignment called for him to set out from Esquimalt for San Francisco at the end of February. Subsequently, he purchased twenty-one mules at $150 a head at Stockton and a further fifty-nine mules at Red Bluff. To give direction to the herd, he also purchased a bell mare. By the end of April, he was ready to start on the trek to the Dalles, where the Commission had set up a temporary base, and at this point he made a daring decision about his route. In a journal entry for 30 April he noted: "I have determined to find my way through Oregon by an unknown route; doing this, I shall reach the Commission at least two months earlier than by taking the ordinary mail-route to Portland." He noted also that he had been warned about many dangers. "The country swarms with hostile Indians," he was told, "many large streams have to be crossed, the trail is bad, if any." Later, after passing along the Sacramento River and through the Shasta Plains, these warnings were repeated by a Judge at Yreka. "You'll have your hair ris, sure as beaver medicine!" the judge is represented as declaring. "Why, thar aint worse redskins in all Oregon than the Klamaths." Lord subsequently held the Klamath Indians responsible for the loss of two mules, but he was resourceful in dealing with their chief and in swimming the mules across the Klamath

*Officers of the British North American Boundary Commission. Standing (left to right): Lieutenant Samuel Anderson, Astronomer; Captain John Summerfield Hawkins, Head of Land Commission; Lieutenant Charles W. Wilson, Secretary and Supply Officer. Sitting (left to right): Captain Charles John Darrah, Astronomer; John Keast Lord, Assistant Naturalist and Veterinarian; Captain Robert Wolseley Haig, Senior Astronomer.*

British Columbia Archives

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*British Commission's winter quarters at Colville on the bank of the Columbia River.*

River. On 31 May he arrived at the Dalles. "Ride in amidst the tents of the Commission," he wrote, "anxiously awaiting my arrival." The trek had indeed been an extraordinary achievement. In one month Lord had travelled through immensely difficult terrain, and he had sustained a loss of only four mules.

Lord was not permitted much respite. In early June, he set out from the Dalles to purchase horses at Walla Walla. At first he travelled by carriage and then by steamer up the Columbia River. The journey initially took him through dismal scenery: "not a tree, or shrub visible," Lord remarked, "nothing but grass dry as hay, and level sandy plains." After passing the remnants of the abandoned fort at Old Walla Walla, he arrived at New Walla Walla at dusk on the third day. This settlement had grown up near an army garrison, and its growth had been augmented by rumours of gold finds in the region. Lord described the "city" as "one straight street almost a quarter of a mile in length, consisting principally of grog-shops (or groceries), tawdry bar-rooms, billiard-saloons, a few stores, and 'Corals' for putting horses in." By the following day, news of Lord's presence had spread, and the settlement had become a "perfect horse-fair". Lord prudently made his purchases and returned to the Dalles. "What occupied us three days to accomplish up stream," he remarked, "we do in six hours down."

Subsequently, Lord had to conduct the commission's pack-animals over some of the same territory on the journey to Fort Colville, and this involved some difficult river crossings. The Snake River (a tributary of the Columbia River) was especially challenging; Lord described it as "400 yards in width, and running like a mill-race." On some rivers it was possible to "swim" the animals across, with the bell-mare strategically placed in the lead. But the force of the Snake River made it necessary to transport everything across on a scow, and this took an entire day. Lord was relieved when the group got closer to Fort Colville, passing on the way "through grass and open-timbered land, like a succession of beautiful parks."

Fort Colville itself was for Lord a delightful base. Admittedly, he found it excruciatingly cold during the winter months — so cold, he noted, that ink froze in one's pen, even when the ink was kept hot before the fire. "The steam rising from the teacups would freeze into a kind of sleet," he remarked, "and fall again on the table." Even in the winter, however, when the temperature sank to −30° and the snow was three feet deep, it was possible to shoot sharp-tailed grouse. In

an unusually pedestrian description, Lord remarks: "There were hundreds of them — up they went, and, right and left, down they came again." Clearly there is some irony in Lord's description of the region as a "paradise for birds". As if to justify his carnage, he notes that he has deposited two specimens in winter plumage in the British Museum.

The fishing was as remarkable as the shooting. Near Fort Colville, at Kettle Falls, salmon were abundant in the early summer. Lord was fascinated by Indian fishing practices, noting that "thirty salmon an hour is not an unusual take for two skilled Indians to land." In *The Naturalist in Vancouver Island and British Columbia,* he reproduced a photograph of a salmon taken at the falls. "The salmon photographed was caught in July," Lord noted, "and it weighed 40 lb. 6 oz. I have seen salmon taken at the same falls 75 lbs."

No doubt Lord valued the settled periods at Fort Colville. But he spent much of his time in the field. He was among those who reached the furthest point on the commission's route: Summit Camp in the Rockies (6,480 ft.). Of this terminus, Lord wrote: "The Summit Camp is placed in a snug nook under a massive slaty kind of mountain; there is little to be seen from it save rugged hilltops and snow. Near the terminal point of the Boundary-line is the watershed, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say one may sit and smoke his pipe with one foot in the water that finds its way into the Atlantic, whilst the other is bathed in that flowing into the Pacific." He also remarked on the "deathlike silence" of the region. Rather clearly, he preferred regions more profuse with life.

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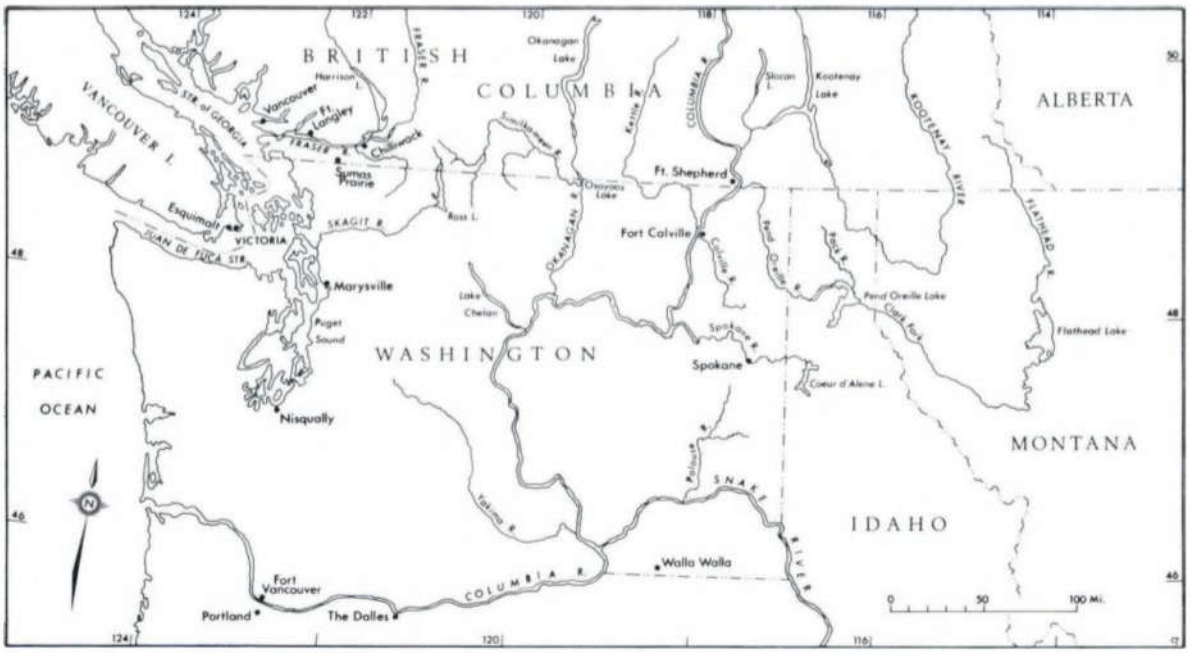
*Cutting on the 49th parallel, on bank of the Moyee River looking west.*

*The Naturalist in Vancouver Island and British Columbia,* from which much of this information is gathered, is a curiously anecdotal book which mixes taxonomy with personal reminiscence and reflection. Lord gives fair warning of this procedure in his "Preface," in which he says that he "has purposely avoided any definite system of arrangement, preferring a pleasant gossip, chatting as it were, by the fireside about North-Western Wilds." In writing of the clam, for



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*Mule packed with pork barrels, with Lord, Bauerman and a muleteer at Colville.*

instance, his analytical account of its habits is followed by an opinionated description of clam chowder. "To my palate," he remarks, "it is the vilest concoction I ever tasted." He regarded those who eat it "with a kind of admiration almost akin to envy." Smoked clams fare no better in Lord's account; they are, he considers, "remarkably like chewing good old tarry ropeyarn."

Lord also inclines to some purple patches of fine writing, especially when he ventures upon religious reflections. He was remarkably untouched by troubling notions of evolution — by the sense of "Nature red in tooth and claw". Repeatedly, he celebrates God's order. In remarking on a hummingbird's reliance on a specific blossom, he declares: "It cannot be chance, but the work of the Almighty Architect — who shaped them both, whose handiwork we discover at every step, and of whose sublime conceptions we everywhere observe the manifestations in the admirably-balanced system of creation!" More succinctly, he declares of the squirrel's pouch: "Where [is there to be found] a more striking evidence of Divine wisdom and forethought?"

Such passages are not simply for the appreciation of pious readers. They express Lord's delight in the natural world. For him the wilderness was more often a Garden of Eden than a threatening environment. Even on his difficult trek from California with his mule train, he experienced moments of sheer delight. Against the background of the Siskiyou Mountains, he found pleasure in the border of reedy meadow where he was able to observe pintails, shovellers, stockducks, and teal. "Where could one find a more enjoyable sight," he questions, "whether viewed with the eye of a naturalist or lover of the picturesque?" The bays and creeks of northern Vancouver Island were "very Edens for wildfowl". Osoyoos Lake, another "Eden for waterbirds".

Above all, it is the abundance of creation which is so remarkable in Lord's account, perhaps especially for a reader today conscious of depleted natural resources. At Kettle Falls, he remarked on fifty (or more) salmon leaping in the air at the same time. On the Sumas prairies, round-fish were so profuse that "it was only requisite to stand in the stream and bale out the fish." Herring and eulachon (or candle fish) might simply be raked from the water. On occasion, this abundance of life could even be inconvenient. Of a tributary of the Fraser River, he writes that the hump-

backed salmon were "so thick . . . that I had great trouble to ride my horse through; the salmon were in such numbers about his legs as to impede his progress, and frightened him so, that he plunged viciously and very nearly had me off."

A generous soul, Lord clearly felt at ease in a bountiful nature. His pen-name might be "The Wanderer," but there was nothing nostalgic or maudlin about his sense of himself. The title of one of his books perfectly describes his disposition: *At Home in the Wilderness* (1867). In the opening pages, he enthusiastically explains the title:

> At home in the wilderness in right good earnest you live rent free, pay no taxes, get fuel for the trouble of cutting it, and water and light without paying a rate. . .; you eat what you like, do what you like, go out when you like, come home when you like, snap your fingers at "Mrs. Grundy," and care less for her evil tongue that the bite of a mosquito.

In this primer for the outdoors, Lord urged his reader to avoid the ready-made — the elaborate bed-rolls and canteens supplied at high cost by outfitters. Much of what one needed lay readily to hand, as he illustrated by a fishing tale. On this occasion he had been aroused from a reverie on a river bank by the splash of a trout. His pack contained only "a few coarse hooks, a bit of gut, and some thread." He proceeded therefore to "knock over" a ruffed grouse and improvised a fly from its feathers, tying the creation together with some red wool pulled from his shirt. Lord conceded that the creation "no more resembled an insect than it did a hippopotamus." But after cutting down a larch for use as a rod, his equipment met with the "most unquestionable success." "That day," he writes, "I played havoc amongst the trouts."

Lord was equally informative about what to do with such a catch. He challenged the idea of cooking in embers and recommended the use of a frying pan. With characteristic forthrightness, he declared:

> I should like to see any buffalo cow-ribs or slice from a fat juicy moose, smoked, scorched, dried, and peppered with ashes, as it always is when grilled upon the embers, at least, according to my experience, that could bear any comparison to the artistic *'bonne-bouche'* I can turn out from my frying pan.

Such spirited advice animated Lord's book. How to fell a tree, construct a bridge, a raft, or a log house, swim a horse across a river, or stuff and preserve a

*View of the Rocky Mountains from the eastern terminus of the boundary, looking south-west.*

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*Sinyakwateen depot camp on the left bank of the Pend'Oreille River. The commission camp can be seen on the far shore beyond the Indian tent and canoe.*

small mammal — these topics and others are admirably presented.

Lord was also as good as his word. Charles Wilson, the supply officer for the Boundary Commission, described a visit to Lord's camp at Diamond Tree Pass (on the western slope of the Cascade Mountains) in mid-December. In his journal, he remarked:

> We found Lord comfortably established in a log hut, a luxury which we could not get on the prairie, with a roaring fire, and better still a good dinner consisting of ducks & pork to which we paid the most devoted attention.

Lord's knack at adapting to changing circumstances is just as evident after his return to England in 1862. In addition to his primers on nature and survival in British Columbia, he contributed numerous articles on the region to popular journals. In some of these articles, personal experience seems to have undergone some imaginative alteration. "How we went to Fort Rupert and made a strange purchase," an article published in *Once a Week*, suggests this procedure. Lord describes here how he set out from Victoria on the *Otter* for Fort Rupert in 1857 — a clear hint, it may seem, of a fictional element, since Lord did not arrive on the Northwest Coast until 1858. At Nanaimo, his party is told of a recent attack by Fort Rupert Indians on the Nanaimo Indians and of their carrying off the wife of the Nanaimo Chief. The Captain of the *Otter* agrees that he will attempt to buy her back, and later, after much animated bargaining, this is accomplished at a cost of thirty blankets and two trade guns (equivalent to £50). Lord expresses some surprise that the Nanaimos should have valued the woman so highly, since she was "short, fat, repulsive, about forty years old, the incarnation of ugliness, a very Hecate!" In this description, Lord would seem to display the same contempt for Indians which is apparent from his account of first meeting with them:

> We soon formed the centre of the vilest assemblage man ever beheld; nothing I have ever seen in pictures or pantomime portraying demons, was half as ugly . . . Men gurgled and spluttered strangely unintelligible noises, women chattered and screamed like furies.

The description seems that of a writer straining for effect rather than recalling an experience, and there is no independent evidence that supports Lord's account of his visit. The description is also at odds with the interest Lord shows elsewhere in Indian life. But such conflicting attitudes are found in other writers of the time. Robert Brown displays the same mixture of condescension and interest, and of fact and fiction, in the articles on British Columbia he was contributing to similar journals at this time. Like Brown, Lord wrote more vividly when apparently keeping more closely to his experiences.

In the 1860s Lord continued to be "A Wanderer." He was active in archaeological and scientific research in Egypt, and while there he is said to have showed such skill in handling venomous snakes that he was made a master of the craft. However, he also expressed some disappointment about the Middle East. He was

not impressed by the pyramids and refrained from getting up before dawn to climb them. He was also disappointed in the desert. He had imagined it to be an altogether flat surface of sand stretching out to the horizon and was upset to find that it had some of the characteristics of the Western plains. Even the snake charmers failed to delight; he was "grievously puzzled" by their procedures and suspected that they engaged in trickery but was unable to establish this beyond doubt.

In 1872 he was appointed the first manager of the Brighton Aquarium, a position he had qualified himself for by such publications as *Handbook of Sea-Fishing*. However, in December of the same year, he died at the age of 54. The suddenness of his death, his fervent recommendation of fried food, and his physical bulk suggest that his death resulted from a heart attack. Over-work may also have contributed. "He was," Francis Buckland remarked, "one of the most industrious men I ever knew."

His years on the Northwest coast seem to have been the most important of his life. He said as much in *The Sportsman in North-Western America*, a series of articles he wrote just before leaving for the Middle East. Near the opening, he recalled his early delight in shooting in Scotland and then contrasted the experience with the finer life of the Northwest — "the wild and solitary life of a hunter and trapper." "Neither the game laws, nor Mrs. Grundy, have any power here," he writes. "It is a hunter's far-off paradise."

Lord wrote more about the Northwest coast than about any other region he visited, and he characterised himself as a Northwesterner in the remarkable lectures he delivered at the Egyptian Hall in 1863. It was at one of these lectures that Francis Buckland first met Lord, and he later described the occasion in an obituary:

> The lecture was full of the highest interest. It was illustrated by well-drawn designs of wild American scenery, and a table by the side was crowded with American trophies. The lecturer was a fine, tall, big-shouldered Englishman, with a great black beard, a handsome, intelligent face, a bold, open, fearless-looking forehead and eyes, that seemed to have concentrated the acuteness and perception of the wild Red Man with the sagacity of a semi-savage fur-trader, while the bright light of education showed that although he wore the dress of a North American trapper, yet he was still a true, noble English gentleman.

Perhaps the portrait of Lord which prefaces *At Home in the Wilderness* is intended to convey this rich cultural mix. Lord's massive beard has the appearance of a formidable natural growth, but the pose is sedentary rather than suggestive of vigorous activity in the outdoors. The image is that of a gentleman rather than of an unkempt wilderness man. Lord appears to be wearing the leather jacket of a woodsman, with strips of leather hanging from the shoulders, probably the garb that he also wore at his lectures. Other portraits of him, together with his colleagues on the Boundary Commission, show him wearing the tweeds he actually recommended. Indeed, in *At Home in the Wilderness*, he remarked of leather clothing: "This style of dress is decidedly showy and picturesque, and having said so much of it, I have exhausted everything that it is possible to say in its praise." With the disregard for heat and humidity which seems to characterize nineteenth-century travellers, he urged his reader: "Take out with you two suits of clothes, made of the best Scotch tweed you can procure."

Another account of Lord's performance at the Egyptian Hall — written by a rather bemused reporter for *The Times*, described Lord's attempt to recreate on stage "a primeval American forest":

> The audience sit among tall trees and gaze on a stage, surrounded by all the signs of wild nature, while Mr. Lord, attired as a trapper, recounts his wanderings on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and through the wilds of Oregon and British Columbia. Referring to a country not so generally known that it can be considered a hackneyed subject, Mr. Lord's discourse is extremely interesting, while his facts are ostensibly derived from personal experience. . . . A few songs sung just well enough for the purpose enliven the lecture, which is, moreover, illustrated by some very effective views from photographs taken on the spot. Altogether, an evening is not ill passed in listening to the stories of "The Canoe, the Rifle, and the Axe," which give a name to Mr. Lord's entertainment.

A performance like this was probably without parallel until Grey Owl took to the stage in the 1930s. It is, in fact, yet another instance of Lord's adaptability that he was as much at home in a lecture hall as in a log cabin.

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*John Hayman teaches English at the University of Victoria. He is the author of "Robert Brown and the Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition" published by the University of British Columbia Press (1989).*

# Fort Reliance Gateway to the Arctic

## BY MARGARET BERTULLI

On the eastern shores of Great Slave Lake stand four sentinels, mute testimony ot the trials and achievements of nineteenth-century explorers in the western Subarctic. Commonly known as Back's Chimneys, these are the relics of Fort Reliance which housed the Arctic Land Expedition of Captain George Back, R.N., in the winters from 1833 to 1835. The log buildings have long since disappeared but the stone chimneys sit on a sandy terrace dotted by clumps of conifers; caribou moss crackles underfoot. It merits the description of "a beautiful but abandoned park", as silence and solitude surround the remains. Catching sight of a tall flue rising between twin spruces, one marvels at their very presence in the wilderness. They conjure images of a different past when the fort housed a crew of men, suffering through winter temperatures of −70°F., and preparing themselves for an arduous traverse by river over the Barrengrounds to the arctic coast.

Over 150 years ago, a British seaman stood beside one of these chimneys smoothing the final coat of clay over the flue. His finger marks are still visible. Now, our small crew of archaeologists and stonemasons are here to ensure that these representatives from a past age survive.

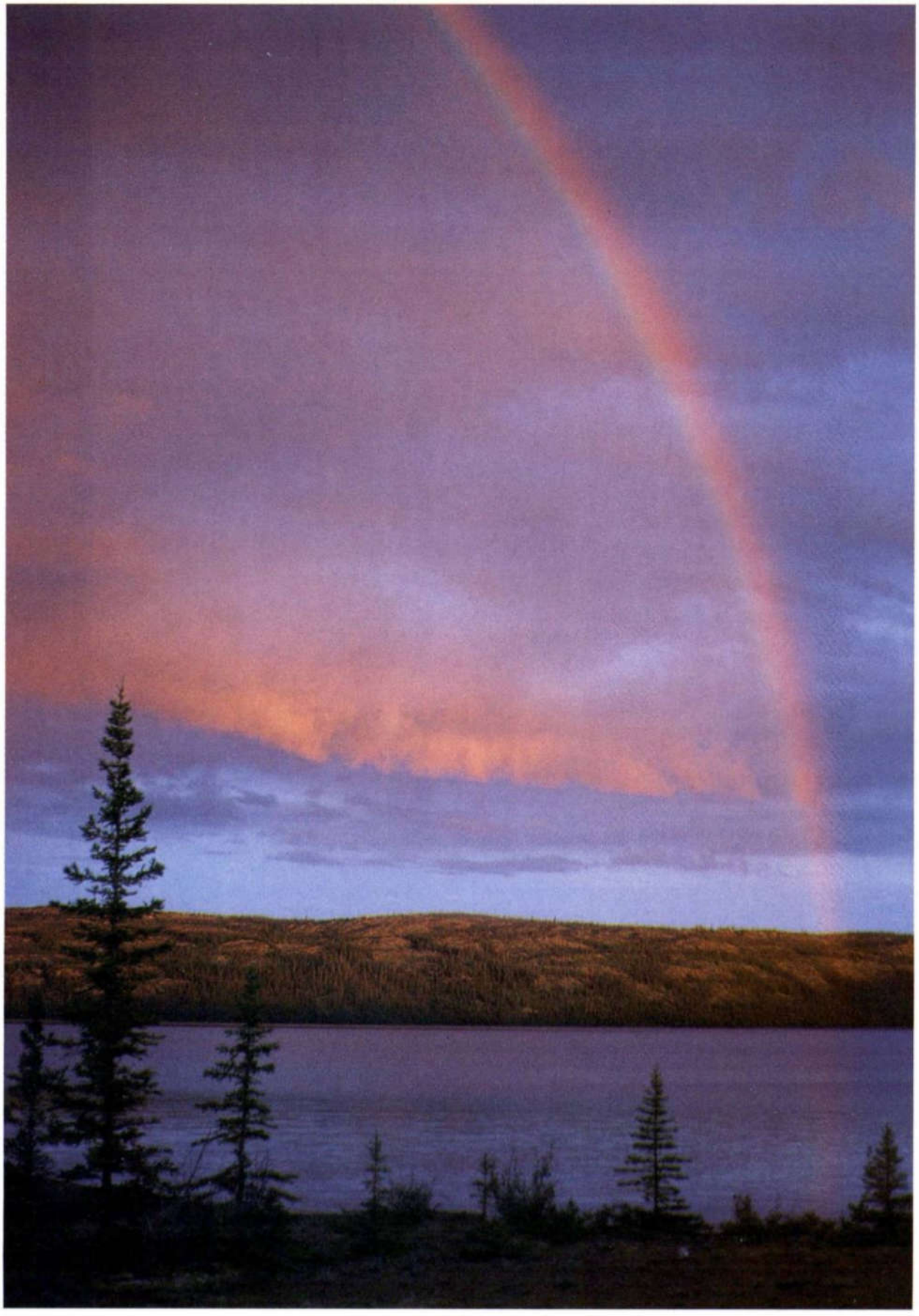
Closer inspection reveals that the elements, as well as human and animal visitors, have taken their toll on the chimneys. Rains have eroded several layers of plaster, exposing the twig lattice tied with babiche which supports the flues, and removing the clay mortar bonding the granite rocks of the chimneys' lower courses. Swallows have stolen loose bits of clay for nesting material. And sadly, people have scratched their initials on the flues. The chimneys were in danger of collapsing and the proof was all too apparent — two flues had already fallen and if the keystones in the remaining structures had caved in they too would have crashed to the earth.

This was the opinion of Henry van der Putten, Senior Restoration Technologist with Parks Canada, and Charles Arnold, Senior Archaeologist at the Northern Heritage Centre, whose responsibility it is to oversee the protection of heritage resources in the Northwest Territories. They had inspected the site in the summer of 1985 and concluded that, as the only visible remains of the fort, the chimneys should be restored to prevent further deterioration.

Why should so much importance be attached to a few crumbling chimneys? Ironically, the ruins of Fort Reliance are among the best preserved remains of early exploration in the western Subarctic. A fort only in name, Fort Reliance originally comprised a main house as the officers' quarters and reception hall for native visitors, several smaller houses for the men, a fenced observatory, and a makeshift kitchen.

Historical research reveals the significance of this small, isolated, and short-lived post in the wider context of the British Admiralty's search for the Northwest Passage, a navigable route through arctic waters to the Pacific Ocean. Over 500 kilometres south of the arctic coast, Fort Reliance is linked to these voyages of discovery and the resulting searches for lost explorers. It became the gateway to the Barrengrounds and hence the Arctic.

As unlikely as it may appear, the episode which led to the construction of Fort Reliance began with a wealthy London distiller, Felix Booth, who financed an arctic expedition led by Captain John Ross aboard HMS *Victory*. This was the first ship equipped with an auxiliary engine and paddlewheels to venture into arctic seas. Accompanied by his nephew, James Clark Ross as second-in-command, John Ross left England in 1829. Their exploration was confined to Prince Regent Inlet, the Boothia Peninsula and the Gulf of Boothia. The younger Ross, a product of the scientific revolution of the time, determined the position of the North Magnetic Pole, then on the western shores of Boothia Peninsula. This became one of the expedition's redeeming features since the *Victory*'s innovative



*The chimney before restoration in the summer of 1986.*

mechanical appurtenances proved useless, and were heaved ashore. The expedition became ice-bound and spent five winters in the Arctic before the survivors struggled to Lancaster Sound, where they were rescued by whalers and conveyed to England in October of 1833.

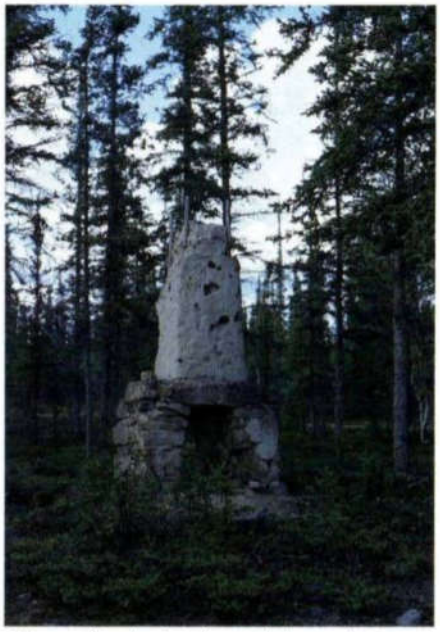
In the meantime, public concern over the Rosses' safety had prompted the outfitting of a relief expedition financed by private donations and the British government. Under the command of George Back, R.N., the Arctic Land Expedition was launched in February 1833. They were to rescue the Ross expedition by travelling from Great Slave Lake to the arctic coast by way of the Thlew-ee-choh-desseth or Great Fish River, now named the Back River.

An enigmatic individual, Back did not fail to evoke strong reactions amongst those who made his acquaintance. He had entered the Royal Navy at the age of 12, spent five years as a prisoner-of-war of the French, and later, from 1819-1822 and again from 1825-1827, served with John Franklin's overland expeditions to the arctic coast where they mapped the western access to the Northwest Passage. During the first of these treks, with superhuman effort, he obtained supplies which saved his companions from starvation. Despite this achievement, Back seems not to have been well-regarded. Detractors called him "intensely selfish, sly and sycophantic," "a dandy and a womanizer," "not very brave" — qualities which would seem to be at odds with those necessary for the leadership of arctic expeditions. His peers criticized him for being too familiar with the men in his command, although the men themselves did not consider this a shortcoming. Beyond the strictures in which these detractions were voiced, in the grueling arctic arena, Back was ambitious, strong-willed, and evinced great stamina under stress. An artist of considerable merit, his drawings of arctic scenes have been published extensively.

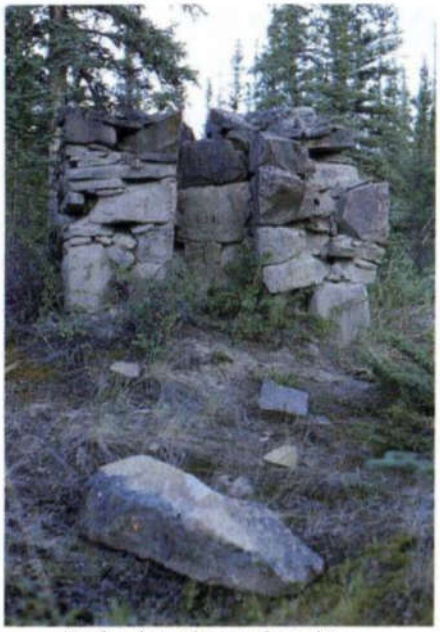
With a party of men, including surgeon Richard King, Back struck off from the east arm of Great Slave Lake over the torturous height of land to the Barrengrounds and located the headwaters of the Thlew-ee-choh-desseth by the end of August, 1833. The party then retreated to the winter quarters which were being prepared for them by Alexander Roderick McLeod of the Hudson's Bay Company.

At Fort Reliance, ironically named "in token of our trust in that merciful Providence," the company passed a winter of severe temperatures, with the thermometer

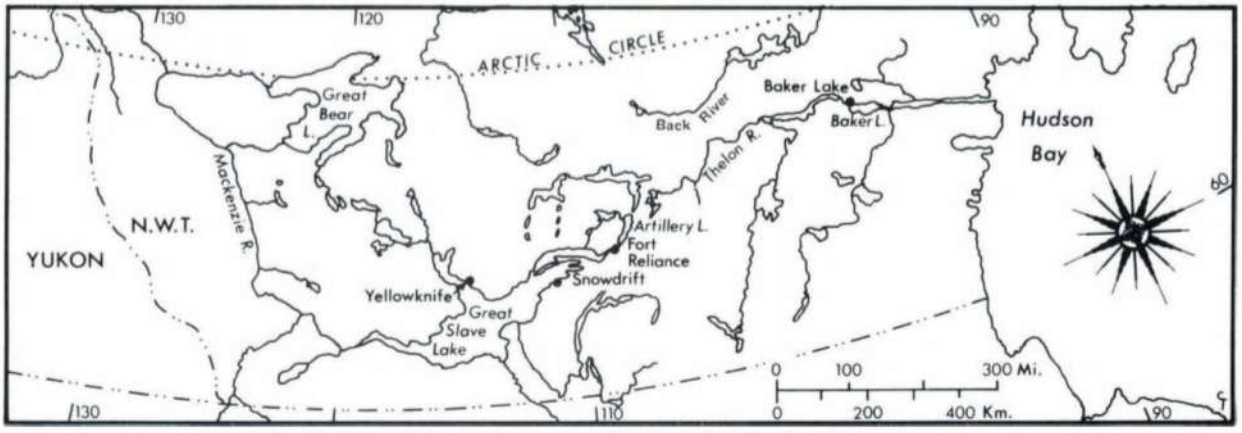
*Stonemasons working on the chimney of Number 3 (main house).*

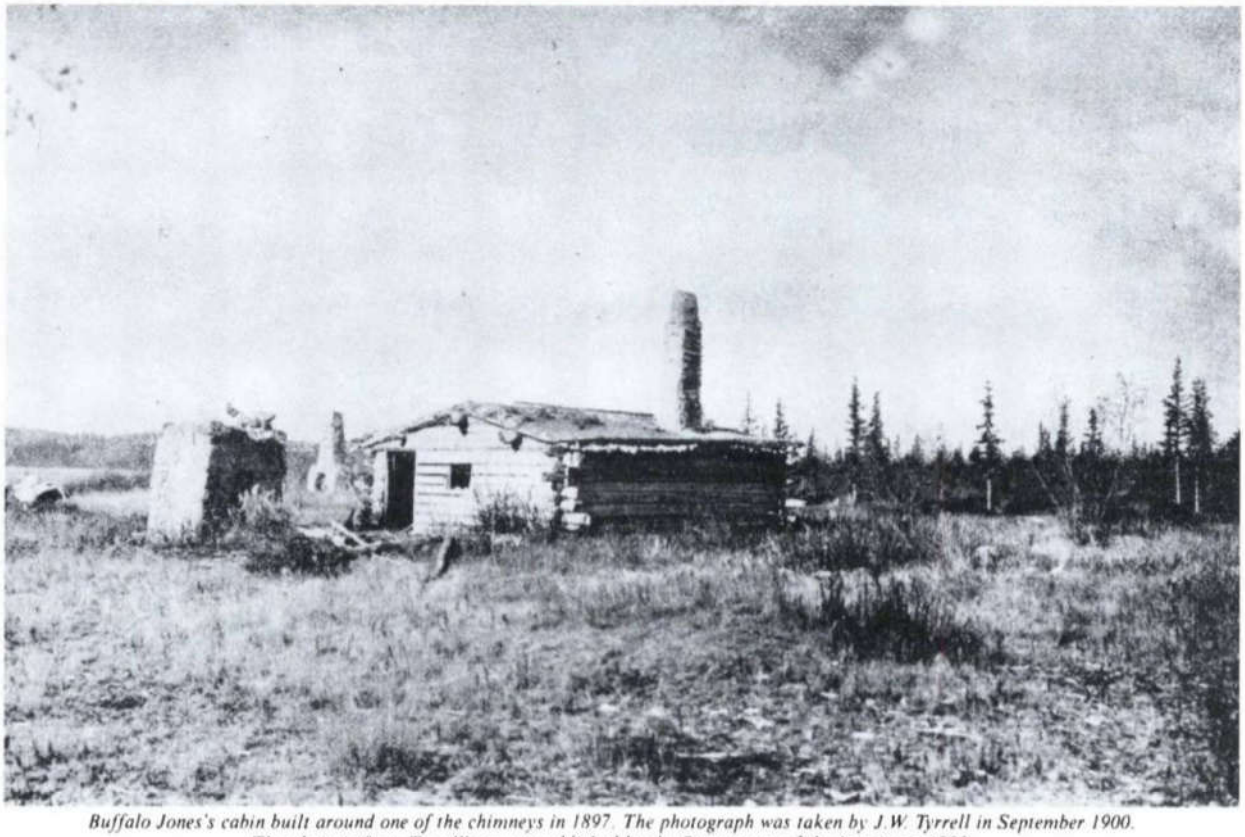


*Chimney Number 1 in the men's house, showing deterioration of the flue, with holes made by birds.*



*Displaced mantle stone from chimney Number 2 of main house.*





*Buffalo Jones's cabin built around one of the chimneys in 1897. The photograph was taken by J.W. Tyrrell in September 1900. The photo is from Tyrrell's report published by the Department of the Interior in 1902.*

plummeting to −70° F. in January 1834. They were importuned by native peoples on the verge of starvation. In his journal, King wrote ". . .between forty and fifty beings lay dead around us; and so scattered that it was impossible to walk in any direction within twenty miles of the house without stumbling against a frozen body."

With March of 1834 arrived a messenger bearing the welcome news that the Rosses and their party had returned to England some few months previously. This freed Back to continue his scientific studies and explorations.

In June of 1834, he and his men once again ventured on to the Barrengrounds and successfully navigated the Thlew-ee-choh-desseth to its mouth at Chantrey Inlet on the arctic coast. There they spent two weeks, delayed by bad weather which seriously hindered their explorations. They added little to the map of the arctic mainland coast and adjacent islands, an omission which later proved fatal to the crew of the third Franklin Expedition who perished in 1847. Four years earlier, James Clark Ross had incorrectly assumed that King William Land was part of the mainland. This caused Franklin to steer his course into the ice-packed waters of Victoria Strait where his ships became entrapped. Had Back demonstrated that King William Land was in fact an island, perhaps Franklin could have avoided the ice-trap of Victoria Strait to the west of King William Island.

Both portents and echoes of the final, fatal voyage of Sir John Franklin are intertwined with the history of Fort Reliance. Author Daniel Francis recognizes Franklin as the "leader of three horrific expeditions which between them, accounted for more deaths than did all the other expeditions put together." History remembers him as the commander of some ten score men who left England in 1845 to explore the Northwest Passage — never to return. The movements of the expedition were traced from its first over-wintering harbour on Beechey Island to King William Island, near which the expedition's two ships, HMS *Erebus* and *Terror,* were abandoned, then finally to Starvation Cove where the last survivors perished, while trying to attain the Great Fish River and thence the refuge of Fort Reliance.

After over-wintering once more at the fort, Back returned to England in the spring of 1835. The enduring success of the expedition was that Back's map of the Thlew-ee-choh-desseth was not superseded until the mid-twentieth century.

*Workers replace the mantle on chimney Number 2 of the main house.*

Dr. Richard King struck a discordant note by criticizing Back in print for his lack of zeal in adding to the map of the Northwest Passage. King also proposed to the Admiralty that he himself command a re-descent of the Back River for further exploration of this elusive passage. Yet ironically, it was John Franklin who expedited his own tragic end and that of 129 others, by disapproving King's scheme. Historian Hugh Wallace calls King "the chorus in a developing Greek tragedy". Dismissed as a crank by the polar experts, King was ignored by them when he voiced legitimate concerns about the proposed third Franklin expedition and again when he advocated sending a search party for Franklin down the Back River to the arctic coast. King had discerned the route of retreat of the Franklin survivors. Although relief would not have arrived in time to save even one life, it would have precluded the suffering and expense of further rescue attempts.

Fort Reliance mouldered in solitary decay until 1855 when it was refurbished as winter quarters for another arctic overland expedition led by Chief Factor James Anderson, a belated search for traces of the third Franklin Expedition. This foray was sponsored by the Hudson's Bay Company whose experience was in overland travel, as opposed to the Admiralty's preference for large-scale naval exploration. Anderson followed Back's route down the Thlew-ee-choh-desseth, remarking with vexation that "Back's small map is a snare and a delusion" when the party was unable to find its way amidst deep bays, and vowing "I trust never to be guided by such a map as I have again," although in this latter instance the fault of pathfinding seems to lie more with dense fog than with Back's map.

While Anderson travelled downstream, he left James Lockhart to rebuild Fort Reliance which was partially restocked as a Hudson's Bay post. But when Anderson's expedition failed to uncover any significant traces of the Franklin party, he gave orders to close the fort. Lockhart's reaction to this summary decision, after he and his men had laboured for over two months, often in inclement weather, driven to desperation by the blackflies is taciturn: "I have got orders to shut up shop and prepare to start tomorrow morning." And so Fort Reliance was again abandoned to decay, this time in the same summer in which it was rebuilt.

The final episode of construction at Fort Reliance is the work of the energetic American hunter, Charles Jesse "Buffalo" Jones, who embarked on the improbable pursuit of capturing live muskoxen for the Bronx Zoo. Endowed with the honorific title of Colonel, Jones

arrived at Fort Reliance in September of 1897 and constructed a small cabin around one of the standing chimneys.

Native people had warned Jones of their opposition to the muskox hunt. They believed that if some of the animals were removed from the territory, the others, upon whom they depended for food, would also desert. Jones persisted. He succeeded in lassoing and hog-tying four muskox calves on the Barrengrounds, after shooting and breaking the legs of the adult females to prevent the calves' escape. "Cruel," but according to Jones "pardonable in the interests of science." He was returning with the muskoxen to Great Slave Lake, and had reached a point near the Dubawnt River, when the animals' throats were sacrificially slit one night by Indian or Inuit; he was uncertain. Disheartened, Jones did not think to preserve the cadavers as zoological specimens until the next morning, when viewing the wolf-ravaged remains. The project a failure, Jones returned to Fort Reliance which now seemed "a prison" in his dejection and quit it in June of 1899. Indeed, it is fortunate that the cabin and remaining chimneys were still standing upon Jones's return. He had taken the precaution of safeguarding his possessions stored in the shack by a contraption rigged with a rifle and powder-keg. It was designed to explode if anyone had tampered with the building during his absence. The compiler of his journal waxes eloquent about Jones's proficiency in the wilderness, comparing him to Sir John Franklin, who suffers in the comparison.

Such were my musings as I gazed upon these fragile remains — so much history was locked inside them. Thoughts of the hard work which lay ahead broke my reverie. Our first urgent task was to relocate the source of the clay originally used by Back's men to mortar the stones and construct the flues of the chimneys. Using any other bonding agent in the restoration would hasten, not halt, the deterioration. The success of the project hinged upon finding the clay. The only reference to this location was in Buffalo Jones's journal — he said that it was four miles up a nearby river, but which one? There are two rivers in the immediate vicinity. Assuming he meant the nearby Lockhart River we located the source in time for the stonemasons' arrival a few days later, and began the arduous task of hauling it to the site.

The stonemasons set to work immediately mixing water, clay, beach sand and handfuls of marsh grass — the recipe for the clay paste noted in Back's journal. Lacking sophisticated tools and equipment in this remote setting, we mixed the ingredients by tromping them with our feet; Branko, the head mason, said this was how clay paste for bricks was made in his native Yugoslavia. Perhaps Back's men had used a similar method.

The stonemasons worked long and hard each day, replacing loose and fallen stones from the chimney bases, repointing the corners and restoring the flues to their original height, as closely as could be determined from photographs taken at the turn of the century by Dominion Land Surveyor J.W. Tyrrell. In two instances, cracked and missing mantle stones were replaced by new ones selected from a nearby frost-cracked granite outcrop; we were repeating tasks first performed here over 150 years ago.

The archaeologists were not idle while the masons laboured. We cleared the brush from the site, mapped the faint outlines of the buildings in the ground, and built a pathway to protect the archaeological materials covered by only a thin layer of soil. We excavated two stone hearths near the fort which were made by native people who have used this area for centuries.

By demonstrating the historical significance of Fort Reliance and the enduring link between the past and present through this restoration, we have fostered respect and thus protection for this site and others. History is not static; the tangible aspects of history and heritage are ongoing and living. We all share in the responsibility for its preservation and in the richness it brings to our daily lives. As we flew over Fort Reliance, bound for home, and caught a last glimpse of this tranquil terrace, I was glad that I had come to know Back's Chimneys and the stories contained in the silent stones. ♦

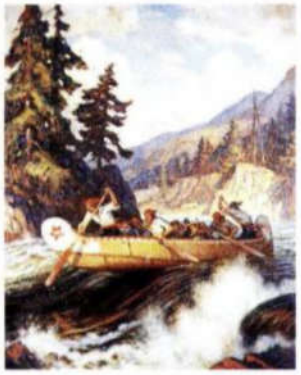
*Margaret Bertulli is arctic archaeologist, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Department of Culture and Communications, Government of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife.*

## The Quest

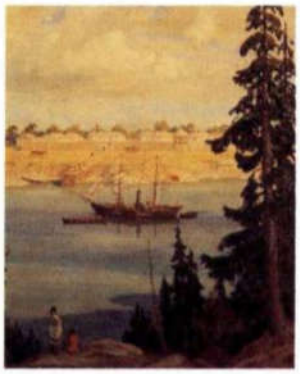
On every side of us are men who hunt perpetually for their personal Northwest Passage, too often sacrificing health, strength and life itself to the search; and who shall say they are not happier in their vain and hopeful quest than wiser, duller folk who sit at home, venturing nothing and, with sour laughs, deriding the seekers for that fabled thoroughfare — that panacea for all the afflictions of a humdrum world.

**—Kenneth Roberts,**
***Northwest Passage*, 1937.**

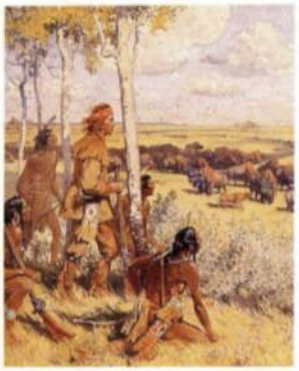
# Historic Paintings
## by popular demand



**A.** *Chief Trader Archibald McDonald Descending the Fraser*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



**B.** *S.S. "Beaver" Off Fort Victoria*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



**C.** *Kelsey Sees the Buffalo*
By C.W. Jefferys.

**D.** *Trading Ceremony At York Factory*
By A. Sherriff Scott.

Over the years the Hudson's Bay Company has commissioned distinguished Canadian painters to create works depicting important events in the long history of the Company. Among the most popular works in the HBC collection are those pictured above by C.W. Jefferys and A. Sherriff Scott.

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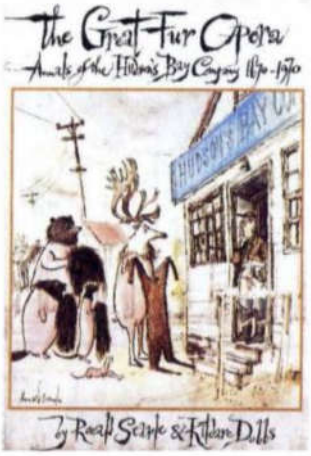


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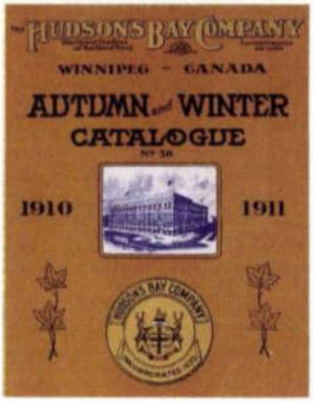


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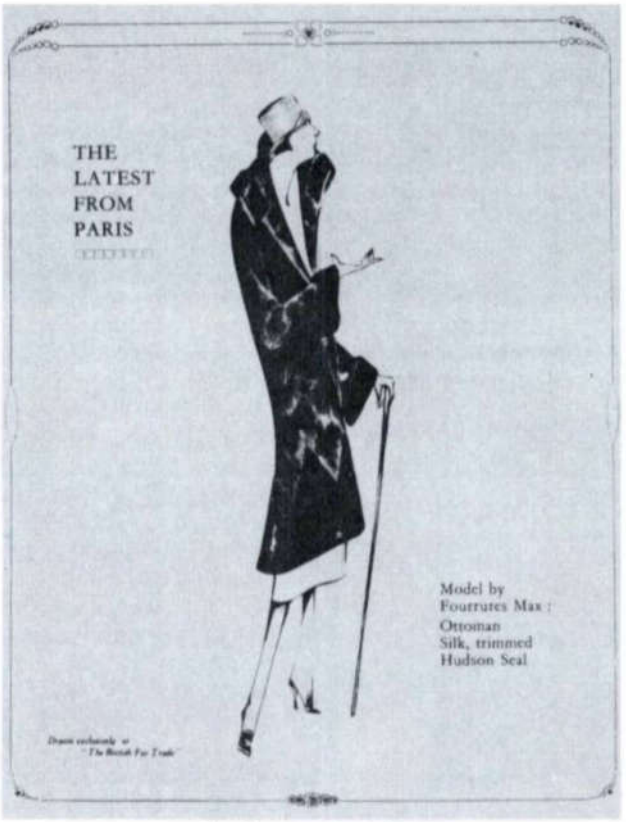
# In the Age of the Muskrat

By Michael Bliss

**THE CANADIAN FUR TRADE IN THE INDUSTRIAL AGE**

By Arthur J. Ray. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1990. 283 pp., illus. $40.00 (cloth), $18.95 (paper).




*The elegant muskrat, from "The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age".*

At last we have a scholarly history of the Canadian fur trade after 1869. A good one too, if a little slim in some respects, a little ponderous in others.

Professor Arthur J. Ray's previous books, notably *Indians in the Fur Trade*, and *'Give Us Good Measure'*, have earned him an enviable reputation as one of the most important fur trade historians since Harold Adams Innis. Now he is the first scholar to make thorough use of the Hudson's Bay Company's immense post-1870 archive, which was gradually opened for research in the 1970s. *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* is a path-breaking book, indispensable because of the ground it covers and the quality of its research and analysis. It will grace many scholars' and library shelves, and be around for a long time.

Ray is nothing if not ambitious: "The major developments I consider include the diversification of the Hudson's Bay Company, the increasing involvement of the state in the region through conservation programs and the activities of the Department of Indian Affairs, the maturation of the North American industrial economy and the concomitant shift of the centre of global economic power from England to the United States, the integration of regional markets through improvements in transportation and communication technologies, and the impacts of two world wars. I shall address these topics in ways that clarify the geography of change."

Ray manages to achieve most of this for the period from 1870 to about 1945. Churlishly, I wish he had done more. I wish his history of the fur trade had ended in 1990, or perhaps 1970, or at least with an epilogue trying to bridge the gap between the end of his book and our era. This would have made it much more useful for teaching purposes and for readers wondering about the fur trade in their own lifetimes. As well, Ray should not have decided to exclude the advance, or retreat, of the fur trade into the Arctic, with its important consequences for the Inuit people. His lack-of-space excuse is unconvincing, for the book has only 228 pages of text. I wish it had 328.

To finish complaining, Ray makes clear that he is hunting serious scholarly game. He does not bother to lure readers with popular historian's hooks, which are usually heavily baited with anecdote, incident, and personality. For the

attempt to do this we must await the next instalment of the works of Peter C. Newman. I do think Ray might have worked a little harder to lighten his prose-style (he can when he wants to) for the large number of non-academic readers this book is bound to have.

Within these constraints, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* is packed with new and interesting detail and interpretation. Kiss goodbye forever to the old Innis theme of Canadian fur trading as the history of monopolies or oligopolies. Ray's book is about relentless, constantly-increasing competition, as the doddering old Hudson's Bay Company tries to fight off wave upon wave of new players in the trade, including major firms such as Revillon Frères, swarms of independent traders, consignment buyers, "live-wire travellers" (with up-to-date market information after the advent of the telegraph), auction houses, and many others.

The HBC did not do well, Ray concludes. "The most conservative force in the industry, . . . it steadily lost ground to a growing array of opponents". Relying on its traditional strategy of trying to meet competition on the frontiers while holding firm to its heartland, the Company saw the heartland shrink and shrink until it consisted of nothing but the Inuit trade in the Arctic. Many of the competitors faltered and were absorbed by the HBC — another of its traditional courses — but Ray concludes that "the Company's take-over strategy achieved very little because small operators took to the field in growing numbers". In 1947 the HBC had 116 posts, which competed with more than 230 other resident traders and some 1,500 fur dealers, not counting Quebec. Through most of the period, Ray adds, the HBC's Fur Trade Department was disorganized and inefficient.

The trade itself was steadily changing. Ray has pages of data on the changing mix of skins, shifting markets, the evolution of traplines and government regulation of trapping, fur-ranching, the impact of bush flying, and other developments. We enter the age of the muskrat, as these rodents supply 69 per cent of all pelts taken by the HBC between 1870 and 1911. It was a development not highly-publicized by the Company (just as well for our purposes; who would want to read a historical magazine called *The Muskrat*?), which usually marketed muskrat as "Hudson Bay seal". After World War I (as we learned from the excerpt in *The Beaver*), the markets were increasingly in the United States, and the whole trade, like so many other aspects of the Canadian economy, was shifting onto a north-south axis.

Ray's greatest strength as a historian of the fur trade has been his emphasis on the role of the natives. This volume sketches a crucial transition, as the ever-increasing role of the state brings to an end most elements of the old paternalism in trader-native relations. Market forces came to operate much more freely, but within the context of the ever-growing matrix of native dependency on the new paternalism of governments. By 1945, Ray believes, most of the HBC's old bonds with its native customers, social as well as economic, had been broken, and the groundwork for the modern welfare state in the North had been laid. He does not tell us who benefitted or lost as a result of the change.

*The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* contains much more. Its too-few pages will be mined for years by professors looking for lecture material, students doing essays, history buffs, retired northerners, and *Beaver* editors in search of ideas to expand into stories. Potential buyers of the book should not be misled by an unfortunate attempt at avant-garde cover design (silver-on-black makes the jacket look like a botched photocopy). This is a book to be judged by its impressive contents.

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*Michael Bliss teaches history at the University of Toronto. He is the author of "Northern Enterprise", a history of Canadian business.*


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# The Métis of Batoche

## By J.E. Rea

**THE FREE PEOPLE — OTIPEMISIWAK**
**Batoche, Saskatchewan**
**1870 - 1930**

By Diane Paulette Payment. National Historic Parks and Sites, Parks Service. (Environment Canada), Ottawa, 1990. 366 pp., illus. $19.75. (Can be ordered through the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 0S9).

I had very much looked forward to reviewing this book; but in the end, it was a disappointing experience. It need not have been so. The author, Diane Payment, is a competent historian and the fate of the Métis community of Batoche of much interest. What seems to have gone wrong is rather a complex story.

Ms. Payment is an employee of the Winnipeg office (Prairie Region) of the National Historic Parks and Sites branch of the Parks Service, which in turn is part of Environment Canada. The book was published under the authority of the Minister of the Environment. Copyright is held by the Minister of Supply and Services Canada and distribution was undertaken by the Canadian Government Publishing Centre. Translation of the main body of the text was done by the Secretary of State. Design and production were provided by Les Enterprises Hélène Bruyére. There were, in other words, a fearful number of fingers in this publishing pie and therein, it seems, lies at least part of the difficulty.

For many years, the Historic Sites arm of our national parks system has sponsored much excellent research. Anyone who has visited Fortress Louisbourg in Cape Breton, the splendid restorations in Dawson City or Lower Fort Garry, to name only three, will testify to the effort expended to realize historical authenticity. Unfortunately, most of this research has been relatively inaccessible, available only in uncirculated manuscript form. The Parks Service has been urged frequently to seek wider dissemination. It seems discourteous indeed to criticize now that they have done so.

The book itself, though admirable in many ways, is not without faults. Payment has attempted to reconstruct the society created by the Métis on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River between 1870 and 1930. She divides her study into four parts — society and way of life, relations with the clergy, political action and the Métis economy. While never intrusive, the dichotomy of Métis life, the struggle to reconcile their Indian and Eurocanadian heritages, is at the heart of much of the pain and blighted hopes of this increasingly marginalized people. This is the theme that gives unity to their efforts to deal with unsympathetic governments and hostile white neighbours. The author's reconstruction of family life highlights the importance of kinship and her examination of the economic bases of their society illustrates dramatically the narrowing of their resource options. The ambivalence of the Métis-clergy connection is largely the result of the latter's inability or unwillingness to understand the Métis and take them on their own terms. These sections are the strength of the book and are based on solid research.

The chapter on political action is less satisfactory, especially Payment's account of the background and events of the North-West Rebellion. In this case, Ms. Payment's research is *too* narrowly based on her Métis sources. It is not that this makes the result overly one-sided, though that may be a fair criticism, but that Métis actions are occasionally inexplicable unless placed in a wider context. She does not appear to have considered the conflicting views of Beal and McLeod's *Prairie Fire,* Flanagan's *Riel and the Rebellion* or Sprague's controversial but important *Canada and the Métis,* all published in the last few years. Her account would have been richer and probably stronger if she had done so.

But the major problem of this book is not its research and argument but its production. The proofreading and/or copy-editing are appallingly bad. It is littered with ambiguities, spelling errors, "typos" and mis-captioned photographs. This is simple sloppiness. Worse, however, is the stilted and awkward prose. One infers that it was written in French and then subjected to a woefully inadequate translation. If not, then the editing was simply so bad as to be unacceptable. It is a shame to be so severe with an otherwise good piece of research. But if the Parks Service is going to continue to publish the fine research of its historians — and it certainly should — then it should do so in partnership with a good commercial publisher. Only then will its authors and its own reputation be properly served.

---

*J.E. Rea teaches history at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg.*

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# A Journey of the Spirit

## By Heather Kirk

**CHALLENGE OF THE HOMESTEAD**
**Peace River Letters of Clyde and Myrtle Campbell 1919-1924**

Edited by R.G. Moyles. Historical Society of Alberta, Calgary, 1990. 337 pp., illus. $24.95.

*Challenge of the Homestead* ranks with outstanding pioneer memoirs like Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* and Catharine Parr Traill's *Backwoods of Canada.*

Clyde Campbell, the principal author, was a brilliant man, trained as a concert pianist, pharmacist and metallurgist. A tour of duty as a supervisor of ammunition manufacturing for the American War Department during World War I and a near-fatal bout of influenza had left him disillusioned and weakened. He came to Canada seeking a solitary, healthy, outdoor life.

In April 1919, Campbell paid ten dollars to file on 160 acres of unbroken wilderness in the Red Willow district about 500 miles northwest of Edmonton, 40 miles west of Grande Prairie, and 60 miles east of the Rockies. Then another kind of war began.

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*Clyde and Myrtle. Roughing it.*

For five years, Clyde, his wife Myrtle and his daughter Isabel (12 years old in 1919), all "city folks," stood together with poor equipment and motley livestock (one cow kicked viciously, one sow ate her piglets) against deep cold, prolonged drought, forest fires, troublemakers, inexperience, isolation, injury, illness, government shilly-shallying, financial problems and widespread economic disaster.

Their shelter was a three-room, 18- by 24-foot, log cabin. Except for a few basic supplies from the general store 23 miles away and the occasional present from Indians or neighbours, they were self-sufficient.

The entire family worked long hours erecting fences, milking cows, churning butter, gathering eggs, hauling water, digging a well, clearing brush, breaking soil, ploughing, seeding, and harvesting. All this and more until 1924, when they had "proved up" by constructing so-many buildings and clearing so-many acres (less than the standard 30 because the terrain was particularly rough), thereby earning ownership of their land.

Yet, although it is a valuable social document, *Challenge of the Homestead* is not an American-Gothic litany of the tight-lipped virtues of foreparents who endured pioneer hardships. Nor, although it is novelistic, is it an "American Family Robinson" adventure. It is a Canadian *Walden:* a distinguished literary record of a sensitive, well-educated person's evolving inner life.

Campbell's letters are full of the stuff of social document. There are sound treatises on the virtues of disking just so, or of reserving a small plot for agricultural experimentation. There are exhaustive statistics about prices, mileages, weights, and other material specifics. There are also exhortations about the need for neighbourly cooperation; for keeping the moral life of the community "on the upward slant"; and for improving the quality of women's education.

Campbell had a practical, inventive, socially-progressive mind in the tradition of Benjamin Franklin (actually Campbell was a descendant of Patrick Henry). Yet he was also an artist.

Campbell's heart-rending descriptions of breaking the stump-and-root-strewn land; his humorous descriptions of the barnyard entourage; his evocative, carefully-observed portraits of the people of the frontier; his angry calls for justice for impoverished farmers from an indifferent government and exploitative banks; his loving vignettes of hours spent with friends, wife and daughter are all rendered with the grace, economy and variety of a master stylist.

The tone is conversational. Words can repeat and sentences can almost

run on, yet Campbell is always in control of what he is saying and is quite capable of refined balance and universal thought.

"I have ambitions," he writes: "quiet ambitions, ambitions that do not even remotely include the bustle and fume of public life. Public life chills me; writing is my love. In the peace and quiet of a home one day I mean to woo my soul in writing. Never would I deliberately choose a life that would rob me of sober reflection, of repose, of peace and freedom."

With utterly unaffected but dazzling virtuosity, metaphors can be poetic (in the cold weather "everything is still as a dead planet"), or homely ("I am as full of optimism as a Mackenzie River husky is full of fleas"), or withering ("Isabel is browsing in the dead grasses of British and Canadian history"), depending on the subject and Campbell's mood.

"If my pancreatic gland is functioning poorly," explains Campbell, "you get a diabetic letter, full of urinated thoughts; and if the old liver rolls up on its purple hump and glowers hatefully, the whole world of thoughts is enveloped in sulphurous hue."

Campbell is a fine anecdotist with an unerring eye for precise, significant detail. Yet the narrative is never precious, or stagnant. Suspense is sustained superficially because one wants to know if the good guys will win, and deep down because one wants to know Campbell as he gets to know himself.

His letters do indeed, as notes editor R.G. Moyles (a Professor of English at the University of Alberta), "bring us into contact with the human spirit " and "take us on a psychological journey".

Beneath his initial, child-like enthusiasm for an "absolutely unsettled country" where "moose, bear and all kinds of things slam across the railroad track at any old time" and there are "enough forests to build houses for the whole world" lurks (he admits much later) terrible fear of the "miles and miles of untrodden, unpeopled isolation."

Although he calls the new land a "Garden of Eden" and mythologizes its "well educated" people as "hardy souls who are not afraid to work to make a future," he panics and becomes obsessed with conquest. Suppressing his fear, he directs all his thoughts and energy into winning the homestead: the "only opportunity" he had "ever" had, he claims strangely.

As he grows in experience, Campbell gradually matures into a leader of local society, fighting with the "decent folk" against the "near-criminals" for a school, becoming a model farmer, joining the executive of the United Farmers' Local. The homestead becomes less a physical and more a moral challenge.

It becomes a spiritual challenge as Campbell faces the sudden deaths of his only sister and one of her children, and then his own mortality. (In 1924 he becomes seriously ill. The editor's epilogue explains that in 1925 Campbell became a "bedridden invalid". He died of Bright's Disease or Nephritis, a disease of the kidneys, in 1930 at the age of 44.) Eventually Campbell realizes that the only enduring Peace country is within.

In one of the last letters, Campbell equates his homestead with the "genuine longing for self-expression".

"This has been a wonderful spot," he goes on, "most beautiful indeed for getting acquainted with one's family. I don't suppose there is a family in the world who are more closely united in love and mutual understanding than ours . . ."

The closer Campbell comes to possessing his land, the less he wants to work it and more he wants to write about it. Marian Fowler in her article on "Pioneer Memoirs" in the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, remarks that, "Erudite, upper-class settlers . . . usually failed as homesteaders in the external battle of taming the land; but they engaged strenuously in the second, more exciting internal battle of mapping it in the mind."

Campbell did not fail as a homesteader, but he did make a distinguished literary map, most beautiful indeed.

---

*Freelance writer Heather Kirk lives in Barrie, Ontario. The book may be ordered by writing the Historical Society of Alberta, Box 4035, Station C, Calgary, Alberta, T2T 5M9.*


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# THE PACKET

*Letters, Notes and Opinion*

## Mystery Grave Identified

I have the following comments to make regarding the article on *The Lost Inuit of Franklin Bay* [*The Beaver*, August/September 1990]. Having spent four years (1928-33) at the HBC Baillie Island Post which was situated on a sandspit three miles from Cape Bathurst, I was familiar with the area mentioned in the article.

The cross inscribed with the name of William John Seymour identified the grave of Bill Seymour, an early whaler who was second officer on board the schooner *Polar Bear* during Stefansson's Canadian Arctic Expedition 1913-18. According to my records Bill died at Horton River on 10 April 1933 and was buried near the settlement. You will note that this date does not agree with the date showing on the cross according to author David Morrison. At the time of his death he was living with his daughter, Margaret Wyant.

The author also mentions Cape Perry Peninsula, but according to local travellers and current maps this should be Cape Parry.

It seems more than likely that if the people of Franklin Bay hunted seal in the summer and spring at Horton River they must have been in steady contact with the Cape Bathurst people as only sixty miles of accessible coast line separated the two areas. Furthermore there is open water off Cape Bathurst for the greater part of the winter, making it an ideal hunting spot for seal and polar bear.

During my visits to Cape Bathurst people and discussions with them during their trading trips to the store I detected what seemed to be two different types of families in residence there. These should not be confused with the Mackenzie Delta people or the many Alaskan natives who moved into the area later.

**W.P. Johnston,**
**Comox,**
**British Columbia**
**(Subscriber to *The Beaver* since 1928).**


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*The 300th anniversary of Henry Kelsey's first viewing of the Canadian prairie in 1690 was marked with a commemorative dollar by the Royal Canadian Mint. The Kelsey design is by Ontario artist David Craig. The face of the coin features a new effigy of Queen Elizabeth II.*

## War on the Lakes

Upon reading your article entitled, *War on the Great Lakes* — [*The Beaver,* April/May 1990] I came upon a historical error that you might wish to have corrected in regard to the capture of Fort Michilimackinac during the war of 1812. The article states that the allied forces which left Fort St. Joseph July 16th, 1812 and successfully completed their mission without any life being taken was under the command of Captain Richard Bullock. Records show that actually the soldiers of the 10th Royal Veteran Battalion, 350 natives of various northern tribes, and 165 Canadian volunteers were under the command of Captain Charles Roberts, a twenty year veteran with the British army in India and Ceylon, who in September 1811 had been transferred to Fort St. Joseph.

Captain Richard Bullock did not take command of the British forces at Fort Michilimackinac until September 14th, 1813.

**Ken McMillan,**
**Superintendent,**
**Fort St. Joseph, N.H.P.**
**Richards Landing, Ontario**

## Trade Goods

I am taking the liberty of writing in hope of obtaining the address of a collectors' club for HBC materials, if any exists. This would be for those seeking vintage materials such as blankets, mackinaws, Indian trade items, Western and early frontier items; anything issued by the Honourable Company. We have had fun acquiring this material for several years on a hobby basis and possess a few of the more common articles, blankets especially.

We should love to affiliate with a collecting club. However, none appears to exist in the United States.

**J.H Johnson,**
**2325 Pioneer Trail,**
**Hamel, Minnesota, U.S.A.**
**55340**

## Pioneers At Vermilion

I received my copy of *The Beaver* and was delighted to find an article by Margaret Stobie regarding the Vermilion area [*Nine Days and Nights on the Trail, The Beaver* June/July 1990]. What really made it interesting was that one of the homesteaders mentioned was a Mr. James Waite, who homesteaded the quarter of land that I now own. It was bought from him by my father in 1918. Another quarter in the same section was homesteaded by a Terry McKeone, and I purchased this land in 1950 from the widow of the man who bought it from Mr. McKeone. Many of the others mentioned are very familiar names, as they were all pioneers in this area.

**Claude N. Brennan,**
**Vermilion, Alberta.**

**Editors Note:** *The Beaver* is sad to record the death, in July, of Margaret Stobie at the age of 81. Dr. Stobie, who was retired from the academic staff of the University of Manitoba, was a longtime contributor to this magazine.

## Rankin Mine

I am currently doing research into the North Rankin Nickel Mine which was in operation in Rankin Inlet, Northwest Territories from 1957 until 1962. I am particularly interested in finding photographs of the mine and the miners who worked there during this period. I would also appreciate locating the names and current whereabouts of anyone connected with the mine. If you can help with this or any other related photographic or textual information, I would be most appreciative. Please contact me at the following address:

**William Belsey**
**P.O. Box 299**
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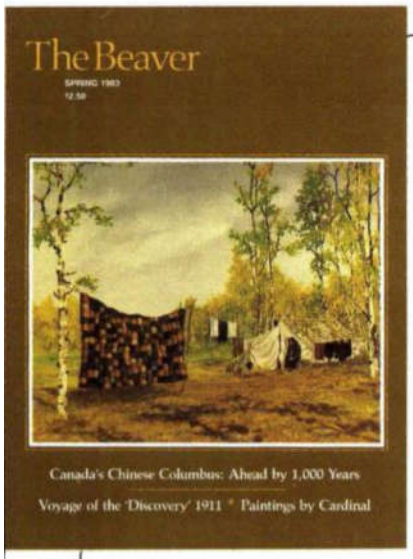


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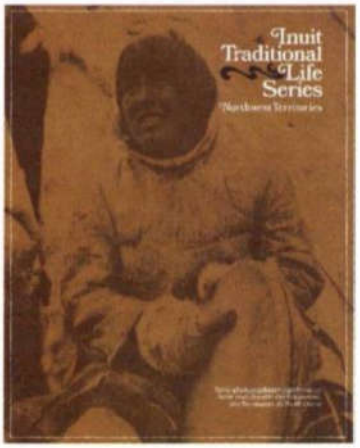


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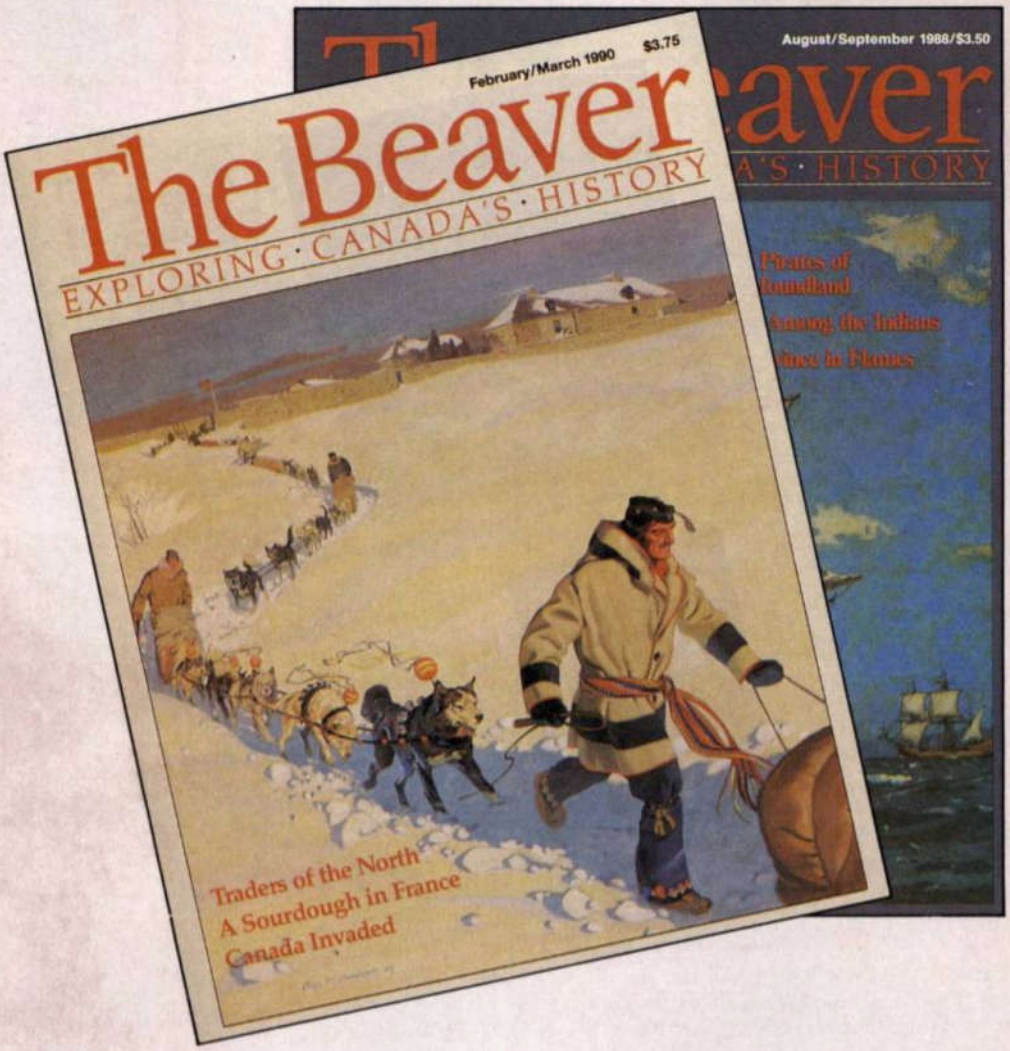


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